

HUNTING JAPANESE TREASURE



# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

The Journal of Professional Warfare

AUGUST 1988

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**SOF  
STAFFER  
SPENDS  
5 MONTHS  
INSIDE  
NICARAGUA**

**PHILIPPINE  
GOLD  
RUSH**

**BOLIVIAN RAID  
GOES BUST**



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE  
AUGUST 1988



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## HEADWEAR

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- Brass Screened Eyelets
- Chin Strap

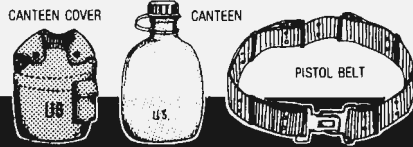


These "Boonie Hats" are the real thing!! Choose between:

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  - Woodland Pattern camo, army's latest issue; 50% cotton/50% nylon. Genuine GI \$12.25/each.
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  - Olive Drab (OD) Green; 100% cotton GI ripstop as used in early Vietnam. Genuine GI \$12.25/each.
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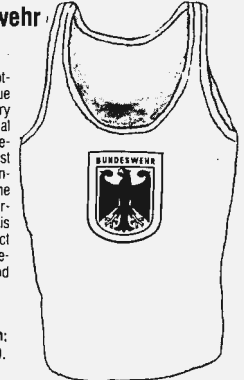
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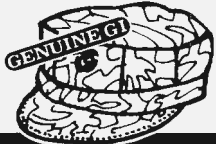
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■ Reinforced Knee

■ Drawstring Cuffs

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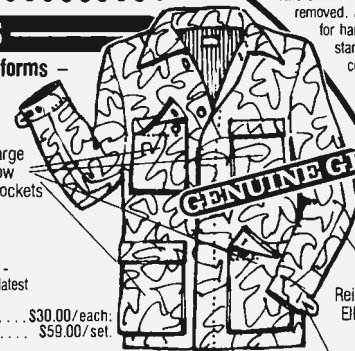
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■ Reinforced Elbows

■ Adjustable Cuffs

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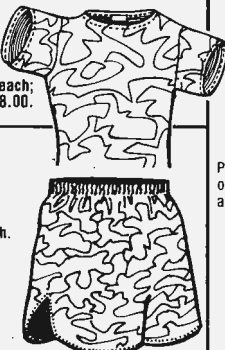
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- Woodland Crew (Round) Neck
- Tiger Stripe Crew (Round) Neck
- Desert Pattern Crew (Round) Neck

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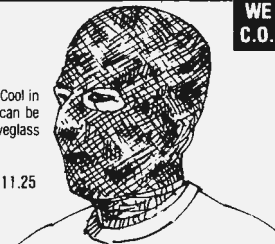
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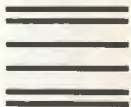
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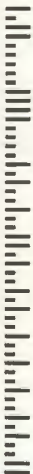
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AUGUST/1988

VOL. 13 NO. 8



RDF in Honduras — Page 44

**COVER:** Reminiscent of the 12-year-olds who fought Russian tanks in Budapest in the 1950s, this 13-year-old orphan joined the contras, proving that in Nicaragua you're never too young to be a freedom fighter. SOF correspondent Steve Salisbury photographed this youth as his unit returned from raids against Nicaraguan gold mining towns and the Soviet-built radar installation at La Luz-Siuna. His story begins on page 36. Photo: Steve Salisbury  
**COVER INSET:** Fortune hunters from around the globe are searching for Japanese war treasure in the Philippine jungle. This sign posted by native *negritos* is universally interpreted as "Keep Out!" Photo: Nicholas Auclair

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# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown



## Death to Drugs

“JUST say no.” You’ve all heard Nancy Reagan’s child-like policy on drug abuse. Perhaps we should adopt that as our response to international terrorism, but somehow I think if we “just say no” to Khadaffi, not much will come of it. Or perhaps if we “just say no” to Soviet imperialism, then they’ll pack up their AKs and go home.

Not very likely. Nor is Nancy’s “Just say no” campaign going to have much effect on drugs. The United States is under direct attack from international drug traffickers, and we’re sitting around saying “no” to each other.

We’ve said no long enough. Now it’s time to take positive action.

My thoughts on this problem may shock some, but drugs are eating away at the very core of our society, and we have to do whatever it takes to stop this malignancy. If we don’t, we might as well cable the Soviets right now and give them the key to the country, because in a few years, we sure as hell won’t have any will left to resist.

My solution is simple: direct action. In much the same way we sailed across Khadaffi’s absurd “Line of Death” and sent a few bangs his way to drive home our message, we should pinpoint major international drug traffickers and send in specialized military forces to surgically remove their presence from the face of the earth.

I’m not talking about poor *campesinos* growing coca leaves in Bolivia or farmers harvesting marijuana in Mexico. I’m talking about people like Panama’s General Noriega, Cuba’s Fidel Castro (yes, he’s very involved), the Colombian Medellin cartel, and the other middle-to-upper level traffickers who

infest the Caribbean Basin, Central and South America, and opium warlords such as Khun Sa who rule the Golden Triangle’s heroin heartland. And the types who buried DEA Agent Enrique Camarena alive after torturing him.

These people rake in billions of dollars each year — at our expense. The DEA, Coast Guard, and U.S. Customs stop only a fraction of the incoming drugs, a small return for our tax dollar investment. Why doesn’t this interdiction work? Because we never touch the kingpins, tucked safe and secure well outside U.S. jurisdiction.

What would happen, though, if suddenly a team of U.S. military specialists, such as our Delta Force, swooped down upon a hacienda in Colombia, eliminated the upper strata of the Medellin drug cartel, then vanished back into the darkness? Would it stop Colombian drug traffic? Probably not, but it sure would slow things down for awhile, and send a clear 5.56mm message to those who’d take their place.

I’m not in favor of using U.S. law enforcement agencies for this task, simply because they’re not suited for it. But the U.S. military is, especially the Navy SEAL and Army Delta units.

I can already hear the screams of outrage echoing around Congress and State at the very thought of using U.S. military forces for preemptive strikes against drug warlords. How dare we take the offensive in the war against drugs — even though we’re presently getting our collective asses kicked.

The drug kings are laughing at us, people. They’re killing our kids and society, and all we do is “just say no.”

We can do better than that. ✕

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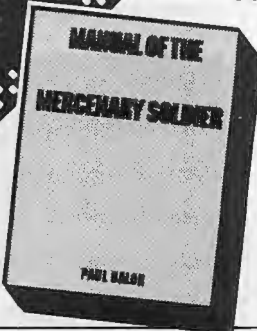


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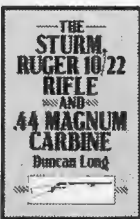
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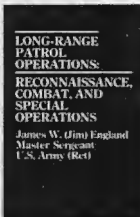
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## THIS AIN'T NO BULL...

We bet you thought it was the muj-wielded, U.S.-supplied Stinger surface-to-air missile that forced the Soviet Union to begin its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Wrong. How about, of all things, mules? That's right, folks. Uncle Sam has been airlifting good ole' U.S. of A. mules to the resistance under our humanitarian-assistance package.

So far, just under a thousand or so of those sturdy four-leggers have flown the hump on chartered Boeing 747s, 114 per flight, to pull duty as supply carriers from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Other worldly mules from Turkey, China and Egypt were tested, but none matched the high-grade excellence of our home-grown version in traversing — and surviving — Afghanistan's rugged mountain terrain.

We won't say it's an idea whose time has come, because U.S. mules provided faithful military service during most of our major and minor conflicts until the 1950s when their use was phased out. These current volunteers to the mujahideen aren't supposed to engage in transporting any military hardware, but, as soldiers in combat know, you use what you got.

We doubt if Congress will strike a new medal for the mules' valiant efforts in combating Soviet aggression, but how about a commemorative postage stamp at least?

# BULLETIN BOARD



## THE BITCH IS BACK...

It may not be making news as we write this, but controversy over Jane Fonda's film, *Union Street*, still rages. You'll recall that many of the good people of Waterbury, Connecticut, led by General Guy Russo, angrily protested the use of their town in Fonda's film. We contacted Russo recently, and he reports that, although the town is still divided on the matter, it has been decided by Waterbury political leaders that Fonda won't be officially welcomed should she decide to come. Another East Coast town, Chicopee, Massachusetts, where it's planned that parts of *Union Street* will be shot, is also up in arms. According to a news report from Chicopee, Clayton Hough, a Vietnam vet and double amputee, declared, "I'll forget Vietnam when Jane Fonda answers this country in the courts." That's our position, too.

And incidentally, we hear that Jane recently axed co-star Burt Lancaster from the set of yet another Fonda epic, *The Old Gringo*. Reason? Lancaster, a political conservative, kept baiting Jane over her Vietnam activities, one source reporting that he used our favorite phrase, "Hanoi Jane."



**One of the reasons (other than U.S.-supplied mules) that the Soviets are cutting their losses and pulling out of Afghanistan. At one point, Soviets ruled the sky, able to inflict devastation via Mi-24 helicopter gunships and air-to-ground attack aircraft with impunity. However, with the introduction of Stingers, Ivan started losing about 1.35 aircraft a day to the mujahideen freedom fighters. This photo was taken by S. Noorulhaq Hussein, a muj trained in shooting more than just Soviets.**



**If there is such a category as a "classic" helicopter, Boeing's CH-47 Chinook would top the list. Boeing is now upgrading the Chinook into a new configuration, the MH-47E, which is destined for Army Special Operations Forces and will be used to run clandestine missions deep behind enemy lines. Current plans call for 16 of the all-weather, all-terrain choppers, with 34 more on option. Photo: Boeing Helicopters**

## RIO EIGHT UPDATE...

A Federal Grand Jury in Miami, Florida is investigating the 1986 Ghana Coup.

Essentially some Americans were hired to lead native troops in a coup attempt against president-for-life Jerry Rawlings by one Godfrey Osei (present whereabouts unknown), who wanted to be president-for-life.

Arms, and a ship to take in the strike force, were obtained in Argentina but then things went a tad amiss. In Argentina, the force made a complete mockery of the words "discretion" and "covert." Lots of dollies, lots of drink and lots of loose lips. Osei was once introduced at a public function in Argentina as the "the next President of Ghana." Nonetheless the force set off for Africa but changed course at sea and entered Brazilian waters — for reasons argued about to this day. The Brazilians clapped the eight Americans into jail. The U.S. State Department, as usual, did nothing while the eight Americans mildewed for months in the less than comfortable Brazilian prison system. Eventually four escaped from a Brazilian jail and four were extradited back to Argentina, where they posted bonds and then took a powder.

If the Grand Jury returns an indictment — presumably for violation

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of the American neutrality act — it could be one heck of a trial. At various times and from various sources, SOF has heard that the plot involved: the CIA, the NSC, Lt. Col. Oliver North, Chinese Mafia in New York, Chinese gambling interests in Hong Kong, Israel and its spook shop (Mossad), American arms merchants, American stockbrokers, Argentina, right-wing Brazilian landowners and the Ivory Coast.

The coup is so complex, SOF is as yet undecided whether it is the Rio Eight "Dogs of War" or the members of the Grand Jury who've stepped into the doo-doo.

## FULL CONTACT KALI...

SOF Associate Editor Tom Bates was among the guests of the United States Kali Association in Albuquerque, New Mexico which recently honored Leo T. Gaje, Jr., grandmaster in the Filipino martial art of Kali, as he was inducted into the karate Hall of Fame. Also in attendance at this spectacular three-day event were Philippine Consul General Mariano C. Landicho, U.S. Olympic Committee karate representative George E. Anderson, Daniel Inosanto, and bladesmith Robert Terzuola, maker of the Combat Kris "Silent Wave" traditional Filipino fighting knife. Law enforcement training personnel for hand-to-hand combat and martial arts experts from around the world filled out the guest list.

Guests were treated to several full-contact demo sessions of Kali, focusing primarily on its application to police work. Mr. Gaje and students from Karate One, International, of Albuquerque provided most of the demonstrations. Unlike other martial arts, traditional Kali instruction begins with knives — stick and the open-hand techniques are taught later, the idea being that if the student can defend himself against a blade, he has little to fear from empty-handed fighting.

For more information on Kali and other martial arts training, contact Raymond Barrera, Jr. of Karate One, International, Dept. SOF, 10301 Comanche N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87112; (505) 292-0255. As a former Special Forces team leader and Vietnam veteran, Ray is a no-nonsense instructor, and one hell of a nice guy. His students, ranging in age from five to 85, were the most devoted and motivated group I've ever seen. We recommend his school without reservation.

## SOF ON ASSIGNMENT...

In breaks between court appearances we're still finding the time to get our writers in the field.

Associate Editor Gary Crouse finally made it to N'Djamena, Chad, and was both over- and underwhelmed. He describes N'Djamena as shot up, hot and operating at a pace that would make Pa Kettle envious. He insists that N'Djamena is REALLY hot — "The first sign of night is when the temperature drops below 100 and the blood-sucking bats come out," and a bit wild, "Half of the people in town are armed with huge knives or pistols and the other half have a knife, a pistol, and an AK." He reports that rumors concerning the decorum with which the French Foreign Legionnaires conduct themselves are all true: "Every afternoon they come into town, go into their Legionnaire act and chase all the women — both of them — out of the pool."

Meanwhile thousands of miles to the east SOF Publisher/Editor Robert K. Brown and his party (Maj. Mike Williams, Paul Fanshaw and Hunter Penn) discovered that in Afghanistan it's sometimes hard to tell who's friend and who's foe. SOF's party was in Afghanistan to wave goodbye to the Russians around Kandahar.

First the Afghan resistance managed to mislay all the equipment (boots, canteens, web gear, ponchos, water purification tablets and antibiotics) the party had brought over, so they went in with less equipment than is desirable. Local water sources — standing ponds — had worked their magic on the boys by the time they wound up in a mujahideen Forward Operating Base south of Kandahar where four resistance factions were in the process of launching a combined operation against a government fort. The muj commander who was supposed to direct the attack never showed up so command fell to at least four and maybe more local leaders; the boys say it was a toss up as to who, if anyone, was in control. Two local muj — fundamentalist, pro-Iranian Shias — made some threats about either 1) killing the Americans or 2) asking them to visit Iran, so RKB and party headed for Pakistan. The guide got lost short of the border but Fanshaw broke out his map and compass and moved the group cross country to a muj depot right on the border. Coming in unexpectedly proved decidedly dicey when muj sentries came close to opening up on the strangers. All are out and the story is upcoming in SOF.

Further south, SOF's Technical Editor Peter Kokalis was traveling with the 101st Battalion of the South West Africa Territory Force. Kokalis, in Africa to work on technical pieces on the South Africa weapons, artillery and mechanized infantry, discovered that the communist guerrillas are using state-of-the-art Italian anti-personnel mines.

## THE HIGH PRICE OF VICTORY...

With the Soviets on the road headed north, it's obvious the Afghan people have won at least a partial victory. It's impossible to predict if the victory is total, as the Kabul puppet regime remains to be ousted and there is considerable speculation that the Soviets may try to hold some of Afghanistan's northern provinces.

The cost? The Pakistani affiliate of the Gallup Polls surveyed 1,300 of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and concluded that the population loss is around 9 percent, or approximately 1,500,000 people. Comparatively the Afghans have lost more people in the war than the Soviets lost in World War II.

Freedom is never cheap and when you're up against the Soviet Empire it is dear indeed.

## HONOR ROLL...

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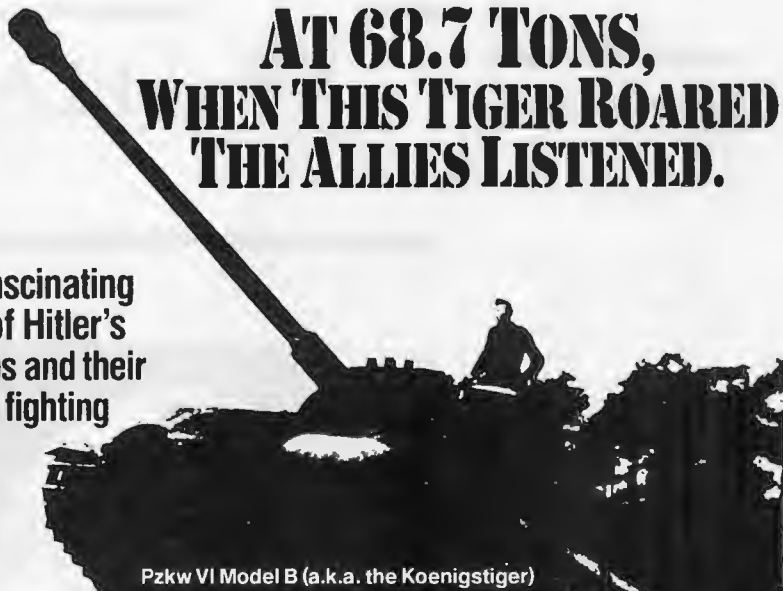
Joseph Anders — in honor of Col North, Arthur C. Burns, Wayne Lehner, Paul Parent, SSGT Wojo USMCR, Conservative Caucus of Lower Delaware, Memory of 101st Airborne Troopers who made supreme sacrifice, Christopher Marquette, Robert Redmond, Jr., Thomas Hill, Ken Schustereit, Kevin Hutchison.

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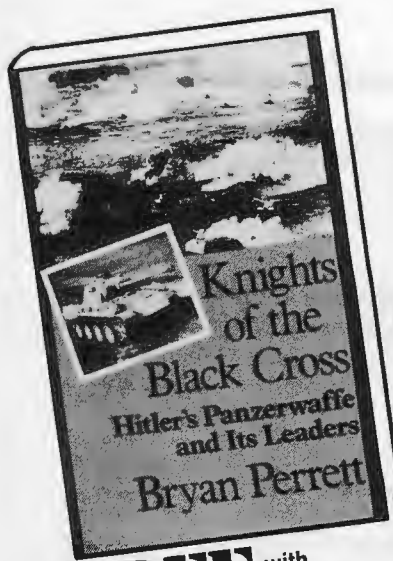
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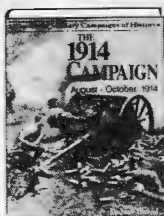
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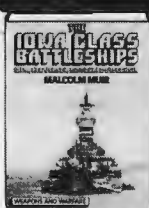
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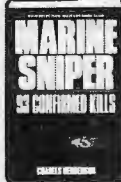
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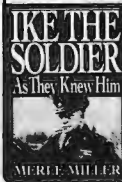
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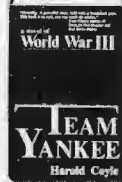
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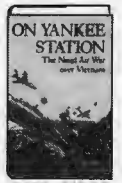
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## WHAT'S WRONG WITH SOME PEOPLE?...

Sirs:

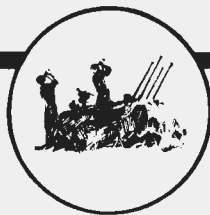
This letter addresses the anti-gun crowd as well as the so called "peace" demonstrators.

Being a member of the U.S. Navy poses some risk, the same as with any other branch of the service. And all members realize these risks and potential hazards before they sign up. I'd like to know why the ignorant sign waving fools stand outside our post gate, surrounded by dime store journalists, lobbying for us to get out of the Persian Gulf. What are they so worried about, we're all volunteers.

Why hasn't the media gone and visited our troops and asked them if they felt we should get out of the Persian Gulf. It's their ass on the line. We aren't out there to be heroes or Rambos, we're upholding the freedom of others like our relatives and ancestors did before us.

Many of these same people protesting off base are also the ones against people carrying personal handguns. Again, why do they press for more and more stringent laws that law-abiding citizens must wade through. Those on the wrong side of the law will always have the tools of their trade. Why make it harder for someone to protect their family and hard earned possessions.

John Ortolano  
Orlando, Florida



## FLAK



## WEAPONS FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS...

Sirs:

Could you provide me with an address to which I could send money for weapons aid to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters? If you listed the addresses for the Nicaraguan and Afghanistan freedom fighters organizations at the bottom of your editorial page in every issue I bet many readers would write out checks every month.

Charles R. Legendy

*Weapons can, generally speaking, only be given by our government with the approval of the U.S. Congress. Private organizations are allowed to provide other forms of aid, which can include in some cases (as in our Afghan Fund) military equipment. One can provide funds — with no strings attached — to freedom fighter groups which they in turn can use to purchase whatever they want. But because direct cash funding is subject to abuse, SOF has generally preferred to provide equipment, medicine, etc. The only exception to this has been the Afghan Fund, through which SOF has routed cash contributions to trusted commanders. Donations for all freedom fighter organizations can be sent to SOF — our address is listed in every issue at the bottom of page 2 — where they are routed to the appropriate fund. Money for the Nicaraguan contras, Afghan mujahideen or Refugee Relief International are accepted by one of SOF's sponsored groups. Donations for other groups, e.g. Renamo, POW/MIA, are forwarded to the proper persons.*

## THE ROAD TOO OFTEN TAKEN...

Sirs:

Enclosed is a poem written by me entitled "The Mercenary."

It would be very much appreciated if you would review and let me know if you will be interested in having this poem printed in your magazine.

Name Withheld

*Talk about the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune — every month our Articles Editor receives dozens of poetry submissions. Now, while we wish every aspiring combat poet the best of luck, health and happiness, we can not publish his or her verse. Poetry submissions are routinely returned regardless of quality or subject matter. There are numerous outlets for would-be bards but, alas, SOF is not one of them.*

## FROM CANADA WITH AN APOLOGY...

Sirs:

I'm writing in response to the article about Canadian veterans in the Vietnam War (FLAK, SOF, June '88). I have reached the conclusion that aiding Vietnam was a just and noble thing for America to do. As America's supposed best friend, I can only feel that Canada was obligated to send her forces to help America and South Vietnam in the war effort. I cannot ever forgive our government for not sending even a token force. And now the Canadians who went are being treated as outcasts and called mercenaries. These people were instinctive patriots that heard their calling.

As time wears on the People's Republic of Canada will run out of war veterans. Seeing how Canada has no plans to protect freedom and liberty throughout the world (leaving this task to their brothers south of the border), it will eventually have no veterans, only "mercenaries."

The liberals in charge of the Canadian Legion ought to be ashamed of themselves and the pacifists in the Canadian government should be drawing up a memorial for these men.

On behalf of the real Canadians in this country I apologize to the Canadian veterans of Vietnam and

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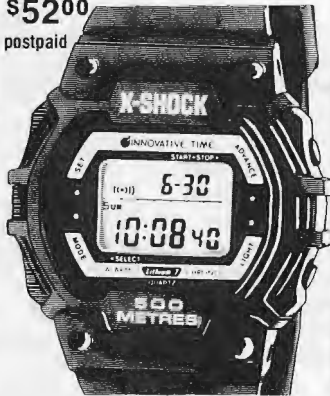


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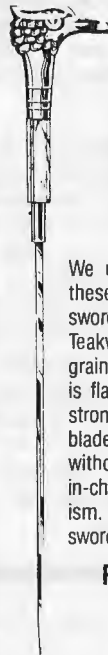
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to the United States for not  
"officially" sending our boys over.  
Gary Topolewski  
Kamloops, British Columbia

## WHO ARE THE GOOD GUYS?...

Sirs:

I am enclosing an article from *U.S. News & World Report*. The article is titled "The Killing Fields of Mozambique." In this article the author accuses Renamo of atrocities similar to those committed by the Khmer Rouge. This article is based on a U.S. State Department report which was developed from interviews in refugee camps outside Mozambique.

This is one of the few articles outside of SOF which addresses the civil war in Mozambique and it does not show the freedom fighters in a very good light. "What if the report is true?" every reader asks himself. Even though SOF has eyewitness articles by authors in the field with Renamo, a U.S. State Department report is difficult to refute.

Renamo has a public image to overcome. I hate to say it, but I don't think that many Americans know where Mozambique is, much less why there's a civil war there. Based on the article I've mentioned, their views will range from nonsupport to hostility and we who care will be labeled "ill advised people who see communists at every turn." Do you have any comments on the report or the article?

Gary Claunch  
Gloucester, Virginia

First I'd like to say that we weren't able to get a copy of the report mentioned in the article since there wasn't enough information given to track it down. Nevertheless I must disagree with your statement that a U.S. State Department report is difficult to refute. The State Department has a vested interest in maintaining its current policy toward Mozambique and a report backing up what they already believed to be true comes as no surprise. Many of the atrocities said to have been committed by Renamo seem more likely to have been carefully staged by troops of the Frelimo government to capture U.S. sympathies. For example, Mozambique garnered



**Mozambican freedom fighter models Renamo-pattern camouflage. Though not apparent in the photo, the pants are green with blue and orange elephants. Anyone want to tell him he looks silly? Photo: Jack Wheeler**

*worldwide attention when well-armed, uniformed "guerrillas" massacred the inhabitants of a small village in mid-1987. Renamo received the blame, but an eyewitness account which described the guerrillas as wearing identical uniforms and brandishing modern weapons makes us very skeptical. Renamo rebels are above all else poor. They are not a well-equipped bush army such as Savimbi's Unita in Angola. Identical uniforms, and every man with an AK? It's a joke.*



**Soviet convoy "ambushed" by unknown muj photographer near Kabul. We think the young truck driver is smiling because the word's out — they're going home to Mother Russia.**

## IF HANOI JANE GAVE BROADCASTING LESSONS...

Sirs:

A few thoughts to ponder. If Judas Iscariot had not hanged himself after he betrayed Christ, but instead took the blood money and opened a bakery, would you buy lox and bagels from him?

If Benedict Arnold was alive today and opened a stationery store, would you buy maps of West Point from him?

If after World War II Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally opened a school offering courses in Radio Broadcasting techniques would you attend? I like to think not. Most Americans are loyal patriots who deeply love their country, right?

Yet these same people line up to buy exercise and body building video tapes by one of our nation's most despicable traitors of the Vietnam War — Hanoi Jane Fonda.

Is our memory so short and our patriotism so shallow that we fail to remember what this female Judas did to our country and our gallant fighting men as they shed their blood. Do we really want to buy anything this traitorous b---- has for sale?

I ask again, if Hitler escaped justice after WW II and started selling gas ovens, would you buy one? Why then do otherwise patriotic Americans pay big bucks to see Hanoi Jane's movies and exercise videos? Makes me want to puke.

Dan Dennehy  
Del Norte, Colorado

First, thanks for putting out the best news magazine in America.

Next, how about doing a piece on Hanoi Fonda's movie attempt this summer in Waterbury, Connecticut. It's been on the news a few times but I don't know who exactly to contact to join in the protest.

Christopher Marquette  
Old Mystic, Connecticut

*It's in the works.*

## LETTERS

**Your input has made FLAK one of SOF's most popular columns. Write and tell us your opinion of SOF or any subject you consider worth our readers' attention. We reserve the right to edit for content and brevity. Send letters to FLAK, c/o SOF, PO Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. ✕**

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## Phaser Tear Gas

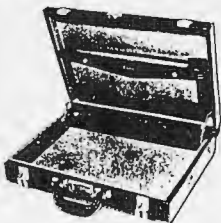


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#A-030.....Pocket Phaser.....\$19.95

#A-031.....Police Phaser.....\$29.95

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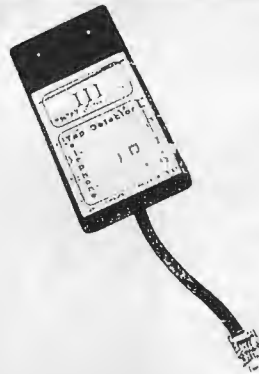


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SOF's Technical Editor receives a considerable amount of correspondence, some of which is quite interesting and some of which is, in no small measure, argumentative. We have decided to share the best of these, along with his responses, with SOF's readers on a more or less regular basis.

### SPANISH M1916 MAUSERS

... As an importer of the Spanish M1916 Mauser, we were very much chagrined that you would make a blanket assessment without first doing an in-depth study to obtain the facts for yourself.

For our own satisfaction we sent two of the Spanish M1916 (converted to .308) Mausers to H.P. White Testing Laboratory for destruction tests. A copy of this report is enclosed for your edification. You will note that it took 98,100 copper units of pressure to destroy these guns whereas the acceptable average pressure for caliber .308 ammunition is 55,200 cup.

... After reading the H.P. White test results we think you will realize that this gun has proven itself.

SAMCO Enterprises,  
Inc.  
Ghulam Jilani Dossul  
President

Spanish Arsenal data indicates that 7.62x51mm CETME ammunition (for which these rifles were re-chambered), although dimensionally similar to the 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge, most often consisted of a 112-grain bullet with a propellant charge weight of only 28 grains. This yielded a muzzle velocity of 2,493 fps with chamber pressures varying between 42,669 psi (pounds per square inch) and 49,780.5 psi. The 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge usually features a 150-grain bullet and a propellant charge weight of 43 grains. This will produce a muzzle velocity of 2,860 fps with a maximum average chamber pressure of 55,200 cup (copper units of pressure). Unfortunately psi and cup units are not equivalent and there is no acceptable means of conversion from one unit to the other as with increasing pressure the difference between them increases. However, psi units signify greater pressure than cup units and 42,000 to 49,000 psi would be roughly equivalent to 40,000 to 42,000 cup.

I stated that it would be dangerous to fire Indian arsenal 7.62x51mm NATO ammunition headstamped "OFV 78 7.62 M80" in these M1916 Spanish Mausers. Three lots of this ammunition produced chamber pressures ranging from 65,000 to 69,000 cup! Let's not forget that the M1916 "Mosqueton" was originally chambered for the 7x57mm cartridge which has a maximum pressure limit of 46,000 cup (in fact most ammunition loaded in this



# FULL AUTO

Text & Photo by Peter G. Kokalis

## Mr. Machine Gun's Mailbag



**This Vietnam War era North Korean AK-47 has fired tens of thousands of rounds of corrosive ammunition with no ill effects other than normal wear. Proper cleaning is the answer and SOF's Technical Editor explains the correct technique as well as addressing other readers' inquiries.**

caliber is limited to about 37,000 cup).

Furthermore, I do not believe the conclusions drawn by SAMCO Enterprises from the H.P. White Testing Laboratory results are at all warranted. The tests (consisting of two rifles and seven high pressure proof rounds) indicate only that a chamber pressure of 98,100 cup will destroy the rifle. They most certainly do not demonstrate the cumulative effects of firing hundreds or thousands of rounds of ammunition of 7.62x51mm NATO chamber pressures in these rifles, which is precisely what someone who purchased the rifle

would do. Unlike the "Pack-hardened" German Mauser actions, these Spanish Mausers have relatively soft receivers and continued firing of ammunition with chamber pressures above 46,000 cup will inevitably result in "setback" of the action and ever-increasing headspace. No less an authority than Frank de Haas stated in 1971 in his highly respected book, Bolt Action Rifles, "I consider all of these actions ... as having marginal strength and safety for the .308 Win.(7.62x51mm NATO) cartridge." Still others agree, as Douglas Barrels, Inc. will not install their tubes on these actions. Finally, I volunteered to fly to Miami with 200 rounds of the Indian arsenal ammo if Mr. Dossul would fire all of it through one of his rifles in my presence. My offer was declined. I remain firm in my conviction that these rifles are potentially dangerous and that SOF readers should avoid them.

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## M16 .22 LR CONVERSION KITS

I am trying to locate an M261 .22 LR conversion kit for the AR-15/M16 series of weapons. Sarco has these kits, but they fire semi-auto only. It has been said that Cobray manufactured one that operated in the full-auto mode. Do you have any knowledge of this?

Paul G. Kinnick  
Austintown, OH

The M261 .22 LR conversion kit for the M16 rifle as issued to the U.S. Army is unlocked, blowback operated and fires in the semiautomatic mode only. Sarco, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 323 Union Street, Stirling, NJ 07980; phone: 201-647-3800) also offers a kit made for the U.S. Air Force which is gas-operated, but it as well fires only semi-automatic. These military kits were designed for marksmanship training only, not the simulation of full-auto fire.

The only .22 LR conversion kit for the M16 series that fires in the full-auto mode is the Atchisson. While well conceived, early Atchisson conversion units were poorly executed and extensive hand fitting was required for even marginal reliability. An improved selective-fire version of the Atchisson, called the Mk III, is available for \$141 from Bro-Caliber International, Inc.

(Dept. SOF, Suite 1, 1258 West Cliff Court, Dayton, OH 45409; phone: 513-298-9676).

Be aware that .22 LR rimfire ammunition produces a significant amount of fouling from bullet wax, unburnt powder granules and carbon deposits, which is accelerated when large quantities of ammunition are fired without frequent maintenance. All of these deposits will, sooner or later, retard the rapidly moving reciprocating components of a selective-fire weapon. Full-auto weapons converted to fire .22 caliber rimfire ammunition have, in general, an unsuccessful history of reliability, with the possible exception of some of the Heckler & Koch conversion kits.

## WINCHESTER 9MM +P + AMMO

I understand that Winchester has developed a special 9mm Parabellum loading for the Illinois State Police. What information, if any, is available about this new cartridge?

Mike Pastika  
Phoenix, AZ

Called the 9mm +9+ (head-stamped 'WCC +P+ 87'), Winchester's new ammunition is loaded to Illinois State Police specifications with a maximum average pressure 20 per-

cent to 25 percent higher (approximately 40,000 cup) than industry standard pressure for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge. Its 115-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) bullet features a copper rather than the usual aluminum jacket. Loaded with eight grains of fine ball propellant, this round will move out of a Browning HP pistol at an average velocity of 1,325 fps with a standard deviation of only 10 fps. This compares to only 1,170 fps generated by either Samson black tip or Remington 115-grain FMJ ammunition. Any law enforcement agency acquiring this ammunition must sign a waiver absolving Winchester from any liability and each box is clearly marked, "NOT FOR RETAIL SALE".

## M1919A4 CALIBER CONVERSIONS

Is it difficult to convert the M1919A4 Browning machine gun to either 7.62x51mm NATO or 8mm (7.92mm) Mauser on a temporary basis to take advantage of less expensive ammunition? Is this advisable?

Waldo M. Ward  
Bowie, SD

Both conversions are possible, but

Continued on page 80



**T**HE guard was peering closely at each passport. I couldn't read the expression on his face — his sunglasses made that impossible — but the AK over his shoulder didn't look very friendly, and his jungle fatigues did nothing to soften the scene.

Suddenly, I became very aware that this was sub-Saharan Africa, and a "People's Republic" to boot. In a moment he was going to look at my passport and there was going to be trouble.

Africa in 1976 was in turmoil. Rhodesia was battling for survival against terrorists, things were heating up in the Republic of South Africa, and Angola had just fallen to a Marxist faction. Hostility against real or imagined mercenaries was rampant. In short, the natives were restless. It was a good time to be elsewhere. So what, I kept asking myself, was a small-town Texas boy doing in a place like this?

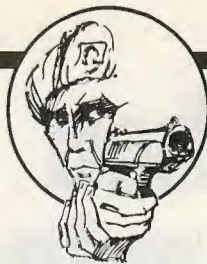
I didn't really plan to become a mercenary. Between bad timing and lack of contacts I had missed the Angolan campaign. Besides, I was married and my wife had a way of crying herself to sleep — rather noisily, I thought — whenever the subject came up.

But I had just gotten out of the Army. Since I was stationed in Europe, a little foreign excitement seemed in order. I set off as a tourist to north Africa, but changed my mind on the way. I decided it was time to head south. Way south, as in South Africa. And if I just happened to end up in somebody's army ... well, that would be all right too.

Plane fare to Johannesburg was out of the question. I'd have to hitchhike through the Sahara, then try to catch the one flight a week to Jo'burg from Lagos. Phase One went fine. Once south of the Sahara, a short hop by plane had brought me to Cotonou, capital city of what used to be Dahomey but now was the People's Republic of Benin — complete with commie weapons and border guards in MPLA-style boonie hats.

The latest leg of my journey had also brought me flat up against a problem: my papers weren't in order. Since my next stop was in Nigeria, I had planned to simply stay in the international area of the airport, not go through customs, and take the next plane to Lagos. Therefore a visa for Benin seemed unnecessary.

This makes perfectly good sense in New York or Frankfurt. It makes no sense at all in parts of Africa where a major air facility is one that has a paved runway, and where customs checks are conducted at the end of the steps leading from the plane. Chalk one up to inexperience. As it was, I had no official permission to be in this country, and if they searched me they'd find the loose-leaf South African visa in the



# I WAS THERE

by Steve McNallen

## Invisible Merc of Cotonou



**Tools of the merc trade. Any of these items can land you behind bars if discovered by a paranoid customs official. Photo: G. A. Cook**

pouch around my neck and some other paperwork that would look mighty incriminating to a bunch of not-too-bright paranoids with visions of white mercs streaming through their heads.

What to do?

The soldier was getting closer with every passing second. I could see the rust stains on his rifle. Hell, I could almost see the inside of a jail cell.

There was no place to hide. It was a bright day in the tropics. He wasn't skipping anyone. There was no crowd to melt into. I got ready to go into my "burned-out hippie" routine, hoping my hyper-charged adrenal glands would let me get away with it.

Have you ever noticed how people almost always signal an awareness of your presence? Maybe they'll make

eye contact, or turn to face you, or move to avoid you? Well, it wasn't happening. As the guard handed a passport back to the fellow in front of me, I picked up absolutely nothing from him. No glance, no body language, nothing at all! He turned to face me ... and kept on turning, taking papers from the person behind me.

I wasn't in a mood for stopping to count my good fortune. I grabbed my backpack and beat feet out of the airport as quickly as I could, wanting to get underway with the rest of my African odyssey.

I still don't understand what happened on that sunny day in Cotonou. I've gone over it a hundred times, re-playing my memories of just how it was, and there's no logical reason why I wasn't stopped, or apparently even seen, by that AK-bearing functionary.

Yeah, I know ... the name of the column reads "I Was There." But for just an instant, as far as that particular guard was concerned, I wasn't. And that was fine by me. ✕



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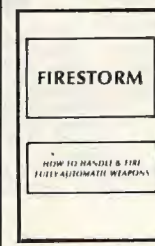
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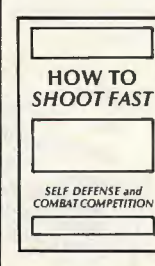
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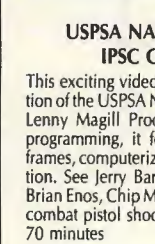
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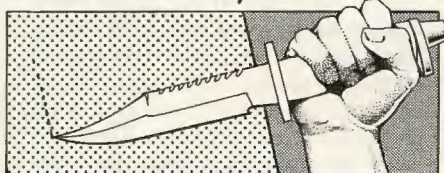
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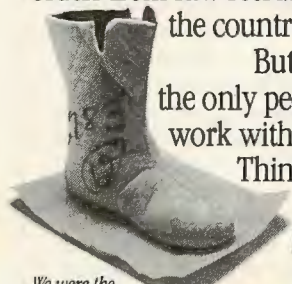
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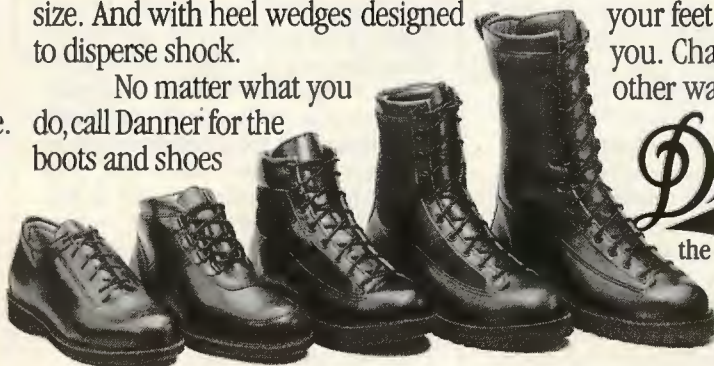
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**OUT OF CONTROL.** By Leslie Cockburn, Atlantic Monthly Press, 19 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003. 1987. 287 pages. Hardcover. \$18.95. Review by Jim Graves.

**W**E make an effort at SOF to keep up with the bad guys and girls and that's the reason for bringing **Out of Control** to your attention.

Cockburn, who formerly toiled as a producer for CBS' *West 57th*, is an extreme leftist, so it comes as no surprise that her two-year investigation into the operations of the CIA, NSC and private American citizens involved in Central America turned up lots and lots of dirt; specifically, drug smuggling, gun running and assassinations.

Like most leftist propaganda, Cockburn's book is full of thinly-documented accusations, short on facts, and information is distorted for political purpose.

Some examples:

**Thinly Documented Accusations:** Cockburn repeats the allegations of three convicted drug runners that they flew Cessna 404s off the Costa Rican ranch of American John Hull. The problem with that story is the strip on Hull's ranch is several thousand feet too short to allow the planes, loaded as the pilots claim they were, to take off. One pilot gave the takeoff weight (including 500 kilos of cocaine) from Hull's ranch as 9,680 pounds. A Cessna 404 with that payload would require about 4,500 feet of runway. Hull's strip is grass, just under 3,000 feet and only about 1,900 feet are usable.

**Distorted Information:** In 1984 when someone set off a bomb at a press conference called by contra commander Eden Pastora, a number of journalists were killed or injured. Freelancer and Cockburn friend Tony Avirgan, the plaintiff in the \$20 million lawsuit filed by the Christic Institute against 26 contra supporters, was one of the injured. In describing what happened after the explosion Cockburn wrote:

"Toward morning the last of the wounded were finally put on boats for the river trip and then driven over bad roads to the hospital in Ciudad Quesada. Tony Avirgan was covered in blood and bandages." Later she quotes Avirgan saying: "What was most horrible was not being able to help the other people who were injured and dying, to spend almost the whole night there just lying on the ground with others who were slowly dying next to me and just not being able to do anything for them."

From reading Cockburn's account one would assume that Avirgan spent most of the night lying on the ground

## IN REVIEW



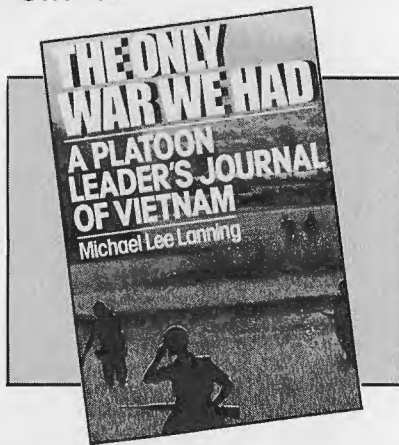
and that he was seriously injured. Both assumptions would be false.

The bomb went off at about 1930 and Avirgan was in the first group of five evacuees. He was in a hospital in Ciudad Quesada by 2330 that night. According to the doctor who treated the casualties, Avirgan and two other journalists who came out with him in the first evacuation, Peter Torbinson and Per Anker Hansen, were among the most lightly injured.

Why distort Avirgan's role? Because Avirgan, a radical American leftist in the 1960s, is suspected of being involved in the bomb attempt himself.

For serious researchers interested in the use of disinformation and the penetration of American mainstream media by leftists, **Out of Control** is worth reading.

**THE ONLY WAR WE HAD.** By Michael Lee Lanning. Ivy Books published by Ballantine Books, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. 1987. Paperback. 294 pages. \$3.50. Review by John Coleman.



**L**IKE many Vietnam veterans now in a position to review books about the war, I'm burned out on them. I have been for the last few years, ever since the market was flooded with first-hand, "there I was, it ain't my fault" apologies from various cooks, clerks and grunts who breast-beat about injustices done to our poor Vietnamese adversaries, and worse, made it a point to make us the villains in Southeast Asia.

Liberal publishers, who ground away the Vietnam era in college while relishing their student deferment status, ate it up. "We're the bad guys? Hey, kid, you're in print!"

That's why I got sick of reading Viet-

nam books. Until a little while ago, that is, when I took a copy of Lieutenant Colonel Michael Lee Lanning's first book, **The Only War We Had** "A Platoon Leader's Journal of Vietnam," home over a weekend. What got me interested was the fact that the book was written from a journal Lanning kept during his tour. He faithfully recorded the daily entries which begin each chapter. Lanning then explains what was behind those few lines scribbled in the bush.

OK, it's not the first time someone's done that. But it is one of the very few instances where a writer (and his publisher, for that matter) has had the guts to simply present a real-life infantry tour in Vietnam.

Lanning was a young platoon commander assigned to the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in 1969-70. He was a hard charger who commanded a good platoon of grunts. There were a lot of bad guys out there. They went out to find and destroy the enemy. That was, when all is said and done, their job. They took hits, they got scared, they were brave. Lanning wasn't a "good buddy"; he was a no-nonsense infantry platoon commander whose job it was to carry out missions with the least amount of friendly casualties.

There were good times, tough times, and bad times, and Lanning records them all. There's no 20 years-after-the-fact apologizing in **The Only War We Had** or its continuance, **Vietnam 1969-70 - A Company Commander's Journal**. There's no attempt to whitewash the absolute viciousness of Vietnam's war. There's no attempt to play Sunday morning general and analyze what went wrong with the grand U.S. Southeast Asian (non-)strategy.

Lanning only attempts to tell it like it was, and the result is a well-written and damned powerful set of two books about infantrymen in Vietnam.

For you vets who are as burned out on "war" stories as I am, read **The Only War We Had** and **Vietnam 1969-1970**. They'll reaffirm your faith that you, as grunts, did the job you were given and did it well, survived the worst, and came home. For those of you who didn't go, Lanning's books will give you perhaps your first real insider's look at what it took to fight — and win — in Vietnam.

Five stars each for these two, the best non-fiction to come out of Vietnam in far too long. ☒

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# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Gerry Thomas

## Third World Command & Control

**“T**HE enemy’s radio traffic must be paralyzed.” We might easily believe that this quotation comes from a current Soviet military manual addressing the importance of radio-electronic combat in a showdown with the West, at the leading edge of new technology. But, the presumption that military command and control is the exclusive province of technologic superpowers is as false as it is common.

The speaker of these words was, in fact, a young South African mercenary attached to the legendary “Wild Geese” under Colonel “Mad Mike” Hoare in the Congo of the early 1960s. His radio traffic analogy referred to the village drums, which were a key communications link among native settlements in areas where the mercenaries were conducting pacification operations. This simple means of communication was very effective in broadcasting information and, if necessary, in quickly summoning reinforcements. Thus, the village drums became a standard target for priority interdiction whenever the mercenaries entered an insurgent area.

This single example illustrates an important aspect of modern warfare that is often taken for granted, or simply overlooked, in contemporary military analysis. Understanding command and control in unconventional warfare is all the more important today, because of the increasing possibilities of low intensity warfare in relation to the decreasing likelihood of a direct superpower confrontation. And command and control is predicated upon communications.

It is thus the swamps, jungles and deserts of the Third World which draw our attention further away from the set-piece exercises in central Europe. And there we find a diverse array of unconventional forces who continue to demonstrate an amazing adaptability in command and control, under the widest variety of circumstances.



**Contra commander Mike Lima, Bocay area, Nicaragua, with walkie-talkie (see “War Zone Bocay,” September 1987). Effective command and control is predicated upon communications, especially in the bush. Photo: Gene Scroft**

For purposes of discussion, this article adopts the broadest definition of *unconventional warfare*, a term often used interchangeably with *low intensity conflict* in describing insurgency warfare in its various stages. Our focus here is on partisan, irregular and mercenary forces, and includes opera-

### INTEL SPECIALIST

Lieutenant Commander Gerry S. Thomas, USN, will be remembered by SOF readers for his article “Waterborne Mercs” (September 1986), and for his book *Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa*. Commander Thomas has served with the Defense Intelligence Agency, Pacific Fleet Marine forces, and is currently an analyst on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations.

tions in Africa, Latin America, Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, and the communications and intelligence systems developed to support these unconventional force operations.

From whispered meetings in covert cells to encoded manpack transmitters, unconventional forces have proven themselves to be remarkably innovative and adaptable in communication systems development. Overall, the key elements of simplicity and opportunity have remained paramount, and it is useful to take a systems approach to see how various insurgent groups have exploited specific communications systems.

Drawing on the experience of his success with Castro in Cuba, Che Guevara considered radio broadcast as “a factor of extraordinary importance” for the insurgent group, and he advocated the use of a radio transmitter even in temporary camps. He espoused radio as the most effective modern propaganda tool, also noting its unique capabilities to support an armed struggle with efficient communications. For example, he proposed that all manner of information be discussed with the target populace over the airwaves, including location of enemy forces, their means of defense, and the practical aspects of combat weaponry. Imagine, if you will, how effective a broadcast radio feature like “The Revolutionary Chef” could be in disseminating recipes for Molotov cocktails and home-brew poisons.

The use of radio broadcasts is particularly important in the early phases of a movement when the leadership is attempting to mobilize the population to support its cause. By establishing credibility, the radio broadcasts condition the populace for acceptance of the movement’s ideas, and prepares them for a call to action at the appropriate time. Radio Hanoi’s broadcasts to the south and Radio Athens programs beamed to Greek activists in Cyprus are two examples where such influence has had a demonstrable effect. In Africa, the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) used this technique in broadcasting their “Voice of Free Africa” programming from Rhodesia until the late 1970s.

The recent history of Nicaragua provides an interesting study in the use of broadcast media by both sides of the struggle. As opposition to the Somoza regime grew more active, the Sandinistas established Radio Sandino in March 1979, based in Costa Rica. This broadcast capability allowed the Sandinistas to mount nationwide operations and to respond proactively to developments, maintaining the initiative. May 1979 saw the opening of a southern

front. By June, there were uprisings in the capital and other urban areas. By the middle of July, Somoza was on his way to exile and the path was open for the final Sandinista move.

Not long after the establishment of the Sandinista government, the opposition groups, or contras, began their own radio broadcasts. Based in Honduras, Radio 5 September broadcasts news and information to anti-government resistance forces within Nicaragua. Other resistance stations include Radio Miskud, and The Voice of Sandino, used by Eden Pastora who withdrew from the mainstream Sandinista movement.

Despite its remoteness, the struggle in Afghanistan is also supported by a variety of radio broadcasts, mainly on shortwave. There, the mujahideen follow a daily radio ritual. Radio Kabul, the official organ of the communist government, is recognized as an obvious source of disinformation, but it is tuned in everywhere during the day for its music programs. In the evenings, radios are first tuned to the Voice of America, broadcast in Dari, followed directly by the BBC, in Farsi. At the conclusion of the BBC programming, Radio Free Kabul comes on the air with an inspiring traditional flourish and programs in Farsi and Pashto. Radio Free Kabul began operations in August 1981, using compact 4.5 kilogram transmitters, originally intending to encompass a network of some 36 sites. Although most are not now in operation, broadcasts do continue and include programs aimed at the Soviet occupation troops, featuring dissidents and well-known exiles.

As an interesting sidelight, broadcast media can also be instrumental in assisting a ruling regime to retain power when faced with an unanticipated military crisis. For example, one night in 1970, waves of unidentified armed men began to come ashore in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, with obvious designs on certain military objectives. Unable to take the radio station, the strike force was forced to withdraw in less than 24 hours because President Toure used the airwaves to summon thousands of Peoples' Militia into the streets to support his regime. Similarly, a mercenary-led coup strike group which landed by air in the capital of Benin in 1977 was quickly forced back aboard their aircraft, when President Kerekou called squads of outraged, machete-wielding civilians to drive the force back.

Turning to tactical communications, all unconventional forces, especially in their early stages, rely heavily on the simple human messenger. Revolution-



**Afghan mujahideen were initially wary of walkie-talkies, but as the war has progressed the resistance is reported to be making increasing use of them for tactical operations. Photo: S. Noorulhaq Husseini**

ary theorists like Che Guevara discussed this method at some length, but noted that there is always a degree of danger from capture or loss, especially if the process involves relays crossing many zones. As a result, particular emphasis was placed on writing communications in code, particularly if the message involved matters of great importance. A small notebook and pen or pencil for writing are listed among the essentials of Che's basic kit for the would-be insurgent.

It is interesting to note that Che regarded women as especially suited for the guerrilla messenger role, for both internal and external traffic. Citing a "thousand tricks" available to the woman, he noted that even under repressive regimes, as a rule women receive much less harsh treatment than men, and are generally perceived to be less threatening than males.

Latin American insurgency movements have built upon Che's groundwork and have established effective and efficient courier systems. Messengers, or *correos*, are used by the Nicaraguan contras for tactical spot reporting, intergroup coordination, and information transfer. Reports from Laos and Burma indicate parallel use of couriers among Southeast Asian insurgencies.

In Peru, the *Sendero Luminoso* has used students as reliable couriers to deliver messages from the urban areas to commands in the mountainous regions. Messages are often concealed simply in a book or cigarette pack. In

one instance, a courier was stopped by police, who took out all the cigarettes but did not find the message hidden in the pack.

In some rural areas, as in Guatemala, runners are used by government counterinsurgency forces as well. For example, twice weekly reports from 23 rural civil defense units, including negative reports, are required by one district headquarters. In some cases, this involves a 40-mile trek through jungle and mountains by the messenger.

In Afghanistan, which has a long history of oral traditions, the resistance messenger, either on foot or horseback, remains a key link in the mujahideen communications system. This is true for both general message dissemination and for tactical field communications. In Afghanistan today, hand-carried dispatches are read aloud at village meetings, with supplemental commentary by the local commander. The messenger then continues his circuit. Recent reports indicate that this traditional process is being accelerated in the western provinces by the introduction of special motorcycle messenger squads, using Japanese equipment brought in from Iran. In addition, pickups and jeeps are regularly used by mujahideen messenger services in the south.

Most accounts of mujahideen operations since 1980 include references to the use of field messengers, even when other means of tactical communications are available. A recent operation by the relatively sophisticated mujahideen under Ahmad Massoud, the regional commander of the *Jamiat-i-Islami* movement in the strategic Panjsher Valley, refers to reports delivered by runners from forward units. In one instance, Massoud was presented a report on activity in and around the capital just the night before, suggesting that while the means may remain traditional, the efficiency of the system is certainly timely and reliable.

A peculiar corollary to the use of messengers in Afghanistan, which defies easy categorization, involves the extensive use of megaphones and loudhailers by the mujahideen. Each group has at least one or two which are used at the onset of battle to unnerve the enemy and to rally the offensive with amplified cries of "Allah Akbar!" In close quarters fighting, especially in urban areas, the megaphones are used for tactical communications during the battle itself. Additionally, they are employed to harangue Afghan Army troops in their outposts with the hope of inciting additional defections to the

*Continued on page 69*





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# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE CONVENTION

## MEMO

TO: Robert K. Brown  
 FROM: SOF Convention HQ  
 DATE: August 1988  
 RE: 1988 SOF CONVENTION & EXPO

*Editorial -  
 just in - important  
 convention info. Run  
 as is. ASAP! RKB*

RKB:

Pleased to report that the 1988 SOF CONVENTION & EXPO plans are complete — everything is a go! Details and specifics follow:

### 1988 SOF CONVENTION

September 14-18, 1988

For the registration fee of \$125.00 each conventioneer receives admittance to 12 informative seminars; admission to the Awards Banquet, the Firepower Demo and the Pugil Stick tournament, a free convention T-Shirt and admission to the Expo. A total value of \$229.00 all for only \$125.00.

### THREE-GUN INTERNATIONAL COMBAT SHOOTING MATCH

(running concurrently with convention)

Patterned after military and police courses, this match is designed to test practical skills in rifle, pistol and shotgun, with over \$60,000 in cash and prizes to the winners. For further details and entry fee information, send a SASE to:

SOF Three-Gun Match  
 408 E. Harding  
 Bakersfield, CA 93308

### 1988 SOF EXPOSITION

September 16-18, 1988

Over 160 dealers and retailers displaying and selling top-of-the-line and state-of-the-art military and police guns and gear, handmade custom knives, military souvenirs, parachute equipment and other items. Held in the Sahara Space Center this is open to the public Friday, Saturday and Sunday with a \$5.00 admission fee. Free to all **paid** conventioners. Children 13 and under are not admitted.

### 1988 SEMINARS

(tentative and subject to change)

Air Operations in Nicaragua .....	Ed Dearborn
Low-Intensity Conflicts, WWII to Present .....	BG Heinie Aderholt
Wound Ballistics: Handgun Stopping Power, 9mm vs. .45 .....	Evan Marshall
Writing and Selling the Military Experience .....	Jim Morris
Freedom Medicine in Afghanistan .....	Bob Brenner
The War in Mozambique .....	Bob MacKenzie
Soviet Armies in Afghanistan .....	David C. Isby
Middle East Terrorism .....	Frank Johns/Saadi Rockney
Shiite Training and Terrorist Methods of Operation .....	Frank Johns/Saadi Rockney
Weapons of the Viet Cong and NVA .....	Peter G. Kokalis
An Introduction to Explosives and Explosive Devices .....	John Donovan
Unconventional Weapons .....	Jim Phillips
Counter Terrorism Driving Techniques .....	Anthony Scotti

## PARTICIPATORY EVENTS

(additional fee may be required)

**ISRAELI INSTINCTIVE SHOOTING COURSE:** Two one-day shooting courses — class limit of 30 students. Taught by Israeli ISDS instructors. Covers instinctive shooting like that taught to the special units of the Israeli military. Weapons not provided. Fee is \$55.00. Further information available from Gene Kelly, Executive Protection Products, Inc., 1834 First St., Napa, CA 94559 or call (707) 253-7142.

**THE DEFENSIVE EDGE I & II:** This event is the complete guide to the defensive use of knives. Includes knife selection and evaluation, combat strategy, offensive/defensive tactics, unarmed defense against knife attack, and throwing. Certificate and badge to each graduate of both courses. \$40.00/course or \$70.00 for the two. Information available from: Ernie Franco, 8173 Monte Vista, Upland, CA 91786 or call (818) 409-9673.

**WEAPONS RETENTION & DISARMS I & II:** Learn how to defend yourself against those with unpure hearts. Learn how to disarm an assailant as well as how to prevent yourself from being disarmed. \$40.00/course or \$70.00 for both. For further information write: Ernie Franco, 8173 Monte Vista, Upland, CA 91786 or call (818) 409-9673.

**DEFENSIVE IMPACT WEAPONS I & II:** Learn the effective use of impact weapons — pocket stick (yawara), straight baton, PR-24, nunchuku, walking stick and others. This course bridges the gap between unarmed personal defense and the use of firearms. For further details contact: Ernie Franco, 8173 Monte Vista, Upland, CA 91786 or (818) 409-9673.

**COMMANDO CLOSE COMBAT TECHNIQUES:** A one-day course on the knife fighting techniques developed by Fairbairn, Sykes and Applegate. Courses available for unarmed combat, knife and stick fighting, sentry removal, prisoner control and personal protection. Graduates receive qualification badge. Pre-registration fee \$50.00. On-site registration \$75.00. Details available from: Nick Tonoski, Shadow Protectorate International, Inc., 5-2635 Granville St., Vancouver, BC, Canada V6H 3H2 or call (604) 733-8209.

**SUBMACHINE-GUN MATCH:** Once again the Survival Store of Las Vegas will conduct its annual submachine-gun competition. Shooters will fire UZI Mini SMGs and the Beretta 93R SMG. Free T-shirt and prizes. Transportation provided. Registration in Sahara Hotel lobby — \$25.00 fee.

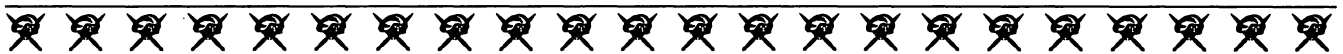
**PISTOL MATCH:** The Survival Store East will conduct its first annual pistol competition. Shooters will fire the Action Arms IMI AP88 .41 Action Express! First-place finisher receives a Special Edition AP88. Free T-shirt and transportation. Registration in Sahara Hotel lobby — \$25.00 fee.

**PAINT GUN WARS:** Presented by Survival Store, Inc., this event features a large indoor maze. Free cap and transportation. Registration in Sahara Hotel lobby — \$25.00 fee.

**PAINT GUN WARS IN LAS VEGAS COMBAT FIELDS:** Outdoor jungle terrain highlights this exciting course conducted by John Sara. Free transportation. Register in Sahara Hotel lobby. Fee required.

As you can see the week is packed full of informative seminars and exciting participatory events. Important to get the word out — space is limited and sure to fill up fast. Pre-registration **must** be received by August 24, 1988. Registration at the Convention begins 1200 hrs., Wednesday, September 14.

Pass the word — don't miss out — register today and guarantee yourself the time of a lifetime!



### Hotel Accommodations

For Room Reservations: Sahara Hotel  
1-800-634-6666

To receive convention rates, you **must** advise the hotel that you will be attending the SOF Convention.

Room rates \$52.00/night (plus 7% tax), single/double.

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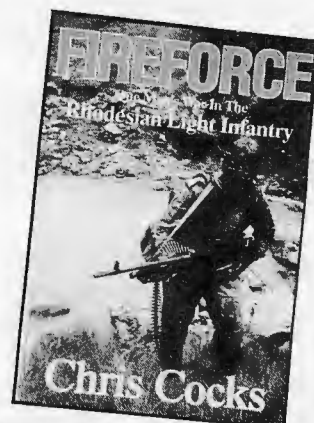
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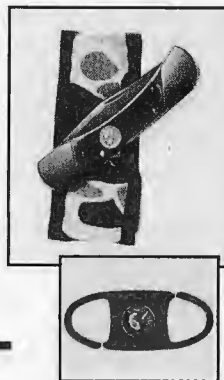
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"The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on.

And all your piety and wit cannot cancel half a line.

Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

— Omar Khayyam,  
The Tentmaker —

**W**HEN Sayd Bahaouddin Majrūh, the Thomas Paine of the Afghan mujahideen, was murdered on 11 February 1988 in Peshawar, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the world lost a voice which will be sorely missed as the Soviets move out and Afghanistan moves toward freedom.

Majrūh's office in Peshawar was always filled with interesting people — resistance leaders, refugees, Pakistani officials, foreign scholars, media correspondents and SOF staffers on their way to cover the war in Afghanistan. They spent hundreds of hours with Majrūh; he was a gold mine of information on that dark corner of the world. He could speak, read and write in Pashto, Farsi (Persian), English, French and German.

Sayd Bahaouddin Majrūh was born in Kabul in 1928 into a distinguished Afghan family. His father, Sayd Shamsuddin Majrūh, served as a cabinet minister, was elected to Parliament, and was a key figure in writing the 1964 constitution, a very liberal document by Asian standards. Naturally, the Afghan communists abrogated the document when they seized power in 1978. The senior Majrūh survives his illustrious son and will continue to be a key figure in a free Afghanistan.

Bahaouddin Majrūh graduated from *Lycée Istiqlal*, the French-language high school in Kabul. He studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, and earned a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Montpellier.

He twice served as dean of the Faculty of Letters at Kabul University, and he was an activist as well. Appointed a provincial governor in 1963-64, Majrūh brought learning and logic to the job. As a diplomat, he headed the Afghan cultural office in Munich, West Germany. And whenever Afghanistan needed an intellectual voice at international conferences, Majrūh was always among the elite chosen to represent his country. He participated in such conferences in the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere.

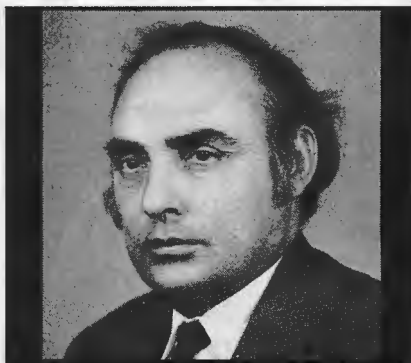
I first met Majrūh in 1963 when I was teaching at Kabul University and he was dean of the Faculty of Letters. He used his considerable powers of persuasion to come into introducing two controversial subjects — Introductory Cultural Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology. Dean Majrūh attended every lecture, every slide session (especially those relating to fossil man), so that he could defend me against the attacks of several mullahs who sat in the front row. He was so successful that he actually had most of them nodding their heads like an approving ancient Greek chorus.

## SOF IN MEMORIAM

# SAYD BAHAOUDDIN MAJRŪH

(1928-1988)

**Patriot, Scholar,  
Humanitarian,  
Resistance Fighter  
and Friend of SOF**



Sayd Bahaouddin Majrūh

by Louis Dupree

Majrūh was like that. With his logic and stabbing wit, he could antagonize the thin-skinned, but he could also convert people to his point of view. He frustrated his colleagues occasionally, but none ever doubted his intellectual integrity, his honesty, his love of country.

He will be missed by all who knew him and many more who depended on the *Afghan Information Centre Monthly Bulletin*, which he published out of his Peshawar office after he escaped from Afghanistan in 1983.

The last time I saw Mujrūh was at Bellagio, Lake Como, Italy, where he participated in an October 1987 conference sponsored by the Islamic and Arabian Development Studies program of Duke University. The subject of his paper was, "The Afghan Intellectual as Refugee: Philosophical and Political Dimensions." Majrūh's contributions were jewels, as usual. The papers read at the conference will be published, and the book will be dedicated to the memory of Majrūh.

### TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

Louis Dupree, professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, knew and admired Sayd Bahaouddin Majrūh for more than 25 years.

To the friend I praise and mourn I say: Majrūh, you are not dead. Your words will ring out as long as words exist. You are immortalized in the card catalogues of the world. You are not dead, but those who killed you are. Allah will see to that on Judgement Day.

Omar the Tentmaker may well be right, but I say:

If all the tears shed for Majrūh were ink, I could write a thousand volumes. ✎

### WHO KILLED SAYD BAHAOUDDIN MAJRŪH?

The assassination of Sayd Bahaouddin Majrūh came as a surprise, and there are many different theories about who did it and why. Some believe the deed was done by disgruntled Afghan party leaders in Peshawar; some believe it was the work of guerrilla commanders disappointed with Majrūh's coverage of the war. I believe we shouldn't neglect the possible role of the *Khad*, Afghanistan's version of the Soviet KGB. Peace may now be at hand (or even around the corner — to complete the cliché), but the Afghan Communist Party may have decided to eliminate a few important Afghan intellectuals in Pakistan, particularly those who have maintained their political independence and haven't

joined one or another of the seven major parties.

If a few key independent intellectuals are assassinated, *Khad* reasoning may go, maybe most of the rest will decide not to return to their homeland. In the meantime, rumor mongers and disinformation specialists will be hard at work, trying to get the Afghan party leaders in Peshawar to blame each other for the dastardly deeds. Their acts may help splinter the already shaky Alliance of the Seven.

But, like most other disinformation attempts, these will ultimately fail.

Majrūh's death will alert other Afghans, and with caution the number of assassinations can be kept down. No matter what happens, the Afghans will return home, and when they do, Majrūh and the other martyrs in the cause of freedom will be honored.

# BUM TRIP IN BOLIVIA

## U.S. Army, DEA and Lame Leopards Lose Face and Save Ass in Drug Bust Fiasco

Text & Photos by Scott French



**LEFT:** Coca for sale in La Paz market. Matte de coca tea is drunk by nearly everyone, including the U.S. ambassador and the DEA representatives.

**T**WO thoughts are fighting for prominence as I lie with my face pressed against the aluminum floor of the Fokker, surrounded by a mob of some 3,000 people who are yelling "Hang the Yankees!" and "Kill the motherfuckers!"

The first is whether I should pick up the M16 on the seat next to me and shoot the first members of the mob breaking into the plane. I have always promised myself that I wouldn't go down easy when the time came...

The second is that somewhere along the way we crossed over the line that separates impartial observers from participants.

Never get involved with the story. That's the first thing they teach you. Stay aloof.

Report. You'd think I would remember that. After all, my father served as a war correspondent with Patton. Some of my earliest memories are of being shipped off to

### BUSTED IN BOLIVIA

Scott French is a freelance writer specializing in intelligence and surveillance. He has written more than a dozen books, including *The Big Brother Game*, and most recently *Credit, The Cutting Edge*. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is his first article for SOF.

the grandparents place for a few weeks because one of his stories had pissed off the Purple Gang and threats had come down as to my health and general welfare. I was four years old.

So how the hell did I get here?

What had become a long strange trip began about a week earlier when I received a phone call from my partner, Peter Laufer. Peter is a correspondent with NBC and is from the old school of journalism; he actually believes in going out and getting his stories. (He will later be fired from NBC after telling the *Washington Post* that most "journalists" write their stories in war zone hotel bars from flak handouts. "The shots on my El Salvador stories didn't come from sound effect records" was one of the better quotes in the *Post* interview).

"Come down to Bolivia — I can't tell you much on an open line but I guarantee some action and probably a hell of a story," he said.

Now there are not too many people whose promises will get me on a plane to fly into the jungles of South America on short notice.

Peter is one of them.

The first inkling of what lies ahead comes at the Miami airport when I attempt to change some hard money into Bolivian pesos. The clerk laughs, "No way, nobody wants that stuff, not at any rate."

The flight I'm on is the Pan Am twice-a-week cocaine special, leaving from Miami with stops in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. The ticket clerk doesn't even raise an eyebrow when I pay with hundred dollar bills. He's seen it all before.

Bolivia is not your run-of-the-mill, tourist-infested country. The dollar fetches somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,000,000 pesos (yes, million) and it gets worse on a daily basis. Restaurants simply drop the last three zeros from their posted prices to simplify ordering.

Bolivian apocrypha holds that in the early 1900s England became upset with Bolivia over some minor matter and decided to teach the insolent South Americans a lesson (and bolster the British ego a bit) by sending the world's mightiest navy down to properly thrash them.

The Royal Navy was almost to South America before someone informed the Queen, awkwardly, that Bolivia is a land-locked country.

That's the way it always seems to go with Bolivia.

Thirteen presidents have served the highest office in the land over the past 13 years. This is the second try for the current incumbent, but the results are not impressive. The inflation rate is among the highest in the world, and the cities are choked with Indians who left the barren farm lands in order to starve in better company. There is not a single supermarket or department store in the entire country.

La Paz, the capital and my destination, sits nearly 13,000 feet above sea level. Stepping out of the pressurized 747 into the thin air is something of a shock. Peter already has a room complete with a rented oxygen bottle which I find myself sucking on in order to rid of a bitch of headache.

Room service brings me a pot of *matte de coca*; the national drink. This turns out to be a brown tea brewed from the coca leaf. It is sort of a local cure-all and is supposed to help with altitude sickness.

With almost no natural resources, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries around, even by the standards of a continent covered with banana republics. Starving Indians live in the many half finished buildings; the windows are broken out of the local hospital, and everyone on the street has something to sell to anyone who even remotely looks like a tourist.

Yet every third car seems to be a new BMW or Mercedes, and the streets are packed. Or maybe they just seem to be packed, especially at night, because almost everybody drives with their lights off, flashing them briefly only if a wreck seems imminent.

I question our contact, a Bolivian national whose parents were Yankee missionaries, about this unusual behavior. He mumbles something and turns away.

"Repeat that."

"They drive with their lights off to save the electricity in their batteries."

Save the electricity in their batteries? The drivers of \$40,000 German cars are saving electricity. Right.

What's going on here?

A trip down the back alleys of La Paz after dark underscores this question. Virtually every doorway has been transformed



Santa Ana, in remote eastern Bolivia, is in the heart of the country's coca-producing region.

into a mobile store front.

New Sony televisions, boom boxes, appliances, cameras, VCRs, garbage disposals are stacked everywhere. Thousands of people are wandering in and out of these impromptu K-Marts, and money is changing hands rapidly.

Always cash. The absence of United States-style department stores and credit doesn't seem to have crimped the style of the local consumers.

"Miami, you can get anything you want here. This is the real Bolivia. The government turns a blind eye, people bring the stuff in by the boatload and sell it here. No overhead, no taxes, no warranties and the price is right. It's what keeps the country moving."

He's right about the price. Everything I

see is about 25 percent cheaper than it would be in a stateside shop. Macy's White Flower Day hits the streets.

There is no middle class in Bolivia. You either starve or you drive a Mercedes. You have a big screen TV and drink filtered water or you live in thatched hut with no water at all.

But even if you make it, you always remember the days when there was no money, and you turn off your headlights to "save electricity."

And the cash. Where does it come from?

Erythroxylon Coca is a very picky plant. Even though it readily grows in the wild, it survives only within a narrow environmental window. In order to produce the active alkaloid it requires certain rainfall, certain temperatures, certain soil elements, and a certain altitude. All of which are found in abundance in Bolivia and in few other places.

Fifty percent of the cocaine on the streets



of America starts out life on a Bolivian mountainside. Every Indian and many city dwellers chew the magic leaf with a pinch of lime and suck the juice (tastes like hell, freezes your jaw and the lime makes your gums bleed).

Not to get high, but simply to live. The leaf combats fatigue, helps the body take in oxygen, and supplies protein and a whole slew of vitamins and things missing in a piss poor Indian's diet.

There is relatively little cocaine in Bolivia, but there is a hell of a lot of coca. The leaf is sold in the marketplace in small bags. You can get a price break if you buy a hundred pounds at a time (about \$18.00).

My partner has spent the last couple of days in the field, staying at a coca farmer's "ranch" and helping the family pick the leaves and turn them in the sun to dry.

The farmer has eight kids and they are starving. His oldest daughter is pregnant and very sick. Her father is afraid they may lose the child. The nearest doctor is four hours away via rut roads, and there is no money.

The farmer insists that the two Americans share the meager family meals. This is a mixed blessing as no one is sure exactly what is in the dishes, but his generosity is moving. After all are we not friends of his cousin (our contact)? Nothing is too good.

There are no journalists here. "Reporter" is a bad word, like "police" or "bill collector." Because reporters have spread lies, the price of coca has fallen to an all time low and the farmers have no money for food or doctors.

The daughter is driven to a doctor. The entry on the NBC expense report will be one of the more creative pieces of writing we come up with.

The farmer remembers when times were good. The coca leaf then brought well over a hundred dollars for a hundred pounds and so other crops were neglected. There was enough money to buy food instead of growing it. The legal coca was being turned into illegal cocaine and shipped to Miami, or Los Angeles, or some other place the farmer never heard of, and he had enough money to get by.

But now the good times are gone. The crop was over-planted, and foreign soldiers are suddenly interfering with the free market process. Tensions are high. Within the last couple of weeks a CBS correspondent and a renowned Bolivian university professor have been killed in the bush. The former was out getting the "real" cocaine story, the latter landed on a jungle runway that belonged to a coke baron.

No questions were asked; no warnings were given. They just blew them away.

So who is supporting the huge Mercedes dealership in Cochabamba?

The first wayfarer on the platinum highway is the lab operator who travels from farm to farm buying the leaves, soaking them in fifty gallon drums of kerosene, mixing them with lime and converting the coca into "pistola," or cocaine paste.

This paste passes to one of 20 or so coke "barons" who convert it into cocaine hydrochloride and ship it to America.

Eighteen bucks for a hundred pounds of leaf, a few hundred for a pound of pistola, a couple of thousand for a pound of hydrochloride, and then a couple thousand for an uncut ounce on the street. . . it adds up.

There's enough profit in the system to support a whole country.

And it practically does.

The first people I have heard speaking English in several days are three young guys in the hotel elevator. They have army whitewalls.

"Just out of boot?" I ask.

They nod, suspiciously. "You American? That's funny, you don't look like a narc."

A good point. Every North American for a thousand miles is either Army or DEA and it's pretty easy to tell them apart. I invite the guys out for a drink and they accept. But first they offer to share their newly acquired "girlfriends" with us. I tell them I'm allergic to penicillin.

A few shoeflies (an amazing concoction of local brandy and 7-UP) combined with 13,000 feet of altitude, and we're all swapping war stories.



Army base at Trinidad for advising and training of 'elite' anti-drug troops. The United States rents the base from Bolivia for an extortionate price — \$4,000 a month for the latrine building alone.

They are part of a tri-lateral force stationed at a jungle base near Trinidad. It consists of the members of U.S. Army (from Panama), a small army of DEA agents, and a couple of hundred "elite" Bolivian troops known as Leopards.

After the usual army gripes, the real problems begin to come to light.

"Man we're in charge of training these poor Bolivian kids. They make about \$50 a month plus room and board, and they're supposed to be shock troops against these coke dudes who pay whatever's necessary for intelligence and help. The kids are scared, half of them rat off every operation and the desertion rate is really high, and we're supposed to turn them into supernarcs."

"Yeah," a non-com assigned to base intelligence chimes in, "we've got problems with the nationals, and we've got problems with the chain of command. Besides the



Fokker troop transport used in the raid on Santa Ana.

officers who generally don't know their ass from a hole in the ground, the DEA is in charge of everybody. Too many chiefs, not enough Indians."

"The base really sucks. We're paying the government to rent the damn dirt to train their troops and cure their problem. We live in tents, the only hard building is the latrine, and it doesn't even have flush toilets, just holes. We pay \$4,000 a month for that building alone."

"Hey, man be cool, these guys are reporters." The non-com is still semi-sober.

"Well they might as well know the truth, that's what they're down here for. Know why we're on a 12-hour leave and we had to come 200 miles for R and R? 'Cause several dumb fucks got caught trying to buy cocaine in Trinidad. Buying the shit we're down here to stop, and now no soldier is allowed in town for any reason. Doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference. The people here hate us man; we're trying to cut off their means of support.

"A guy fell out of a guard tower and broke his arm. The local hospital charged the base over \$2,000 to set it and they still fucked it up. He had to go to Panama to have it re-broken and reset. Man they don't want us down here; even the money we pay



**ABOVE:** Leopards enroute to Santa Ana in the Fokker. Troops carried a mixed assortment of weapons, the most formidable of which were M1s.

doesn't make up for the money we cost them."

(The base commander would later confirm the broken arm story but refused to comment on the drug problem, or the rent figures. However he admitted no leaves were allowed in the nearby towns because of "problems.")

"So far all we have done is kick apart a few jungle labs consisting of steel drums. Big deal. There's never anyone around when we get there, never any coke; they've always been warned of our "secret" raids and leave us a couple of empty cans for our pleasure. So much for the efficiency of our elite troops. This has got to be one of the shittiest duties in the army . . .

"We can't fire even if fired upon, we can't kick ass, we just advise. That sound familiar to you?"

The non-com gets up and drags his buddies out. "Lets go, maybe we'll see you in the bush."

He's right.

We make inroads with the DEA and the Army, but the only offer is to go on a "lab raid" like they have let other reporters do in the past.

These trips are uneventful and controlled; nobody gets hurt, nothing really gets done.

Still, there are rumors of something heavy about to go down. DEA agents hint at the big one in casual conversation. Then an ABC (20/20) news team is suddenly denied permission to go along on a lab-kicking raid, because there is a slim chance the lab might still be hot.

They charter their own plane and follow the narcs into the field. That stupid move seems about to cost anyone else any chance

at coverage. We appeal to the American ambassador (after a pleasant breakfast and art show at his house; I could get used to this style of living) and the DEA.

We want the real story, we're not jerks, we won't do anything to compromise the mission. It's obvious the DEA would just as soon not be bothered with any baggage from here out. At the same time it's obvious that the whole program needs a kick in the ass.

Coke production is not being shut down as promised. There have been no arrests, no piles of white powder sparkle in the sun to balance the steady stream of tax dollars pouring into Bolivia to stop coca growing, arrest the dealers, and pay the farmers to grow something else.

Cocaine is becoming a problem even in Bolivia as chemists are dumping their paste on the local market. Pre-teenage kids smoke the shit and get hooked. It's hitting home.

Victor Paz Estenssoro, the president of Bolivia, had, in an interview with my partner 10 days earlier, publicly stated he would eradicate all coca production within the next three years.

Now Estenssoro was calling for additional U.S. support, along with an extension of the withdrawal date on the forces already in place. He was telling anyone who would listen that his declaration might cause internal violence and that his life was probably in danger. The opposition press was claiming the U.S. troops were in-country simply to prop up the Estenssoro administration rather than to stop the thousand-year-old practice of cultivating the coca leaf.

The time had come to show some results.

Sexy. The top DEA agent in Bolivia told us to be ready to move at any time; something sexy was on the horizon.

In direct opposition to the American ambassador's wishes, the Bolivian government and the DEA want to grant our request to become the first journalists to accompany a mixed force on a major operation.

Maybe a compromise can be reached. The American ambassador and the head of the local DEA contingent meet with our side. Terms are discussed.

This is the first time American troops are being used in an attempt to stop drugs at their source. True, no civilians have ever been considered to accompany this force; still, some good PR would go a long way back in the states where the whole program is coming under fire. We seem to have the credentials and so far haven't made complete asses of ourselves.

The American ambassador and the DEA serve matte de coca as they discuss the possibilities. In effect they are serving coca tea on American soil (the embassy is considered to be in America). Two weeks later an uninformed couple will be arrested by U.S. customs for bringing a box of this same tea home to their friends as a gift. They did not know it was illegal in the States.

Finally we are told something big is in the wind but nobody, absolutely nobody, is going to know what or where until the raid is under way. A Fiscal (sort of a combination



**Bolivian countryside near Santa Ana. It's supposed to be cattle country, but cocaine is the real source of income.**

cop/DA/judge) is being brought in from a far state. He is thought to be unbribeable. Only he, the DEA, and the American Ambassador will know the details until the raid is under way.

The president of Bolivia will be told no more than we are until the operation commences. Will we go along?

Sure.

Then check in every couple of hours until further notice.

The next couple of days pass slowly. Warnings of tapped phones and reminders that loose lips sink ships ring in our ears. We can't tell anyone where we are going or when we will return to the states. Tempers begin to run a bit short.

Then the call comes. We have to get ourselves to the town of Trinidad, a few hundred miles away through the jungle. There are no roads, there are no scheduled flights. We've got less than 24 hours to get there.

End of conversation.

Ah, the power of the press. A call to New York and some intense discussion persuades NBC to foot the bill for chartering a plane to get us across the Andes and to hire two Argentine camera operators. They speak little English, so my shaky German and Peter's less-than-shaky Spanish have got to suffice. After days of waiting things are happening fast; time seems to be compressing on itself.

The view from the turboprop aircraft is fantastic. We bounce around in the currents and pass by the wreckage of a DC-7 which crashed the previous month. Then we are landing in Trinidad.

Selecting accommodations is not a problem; there's only one hotel in town. It is full. A bribe is discussed. The five of us are given one room.

Given the location an overflow crowd seems unlikely, so I sneak a glance at the back register. Some 30-odd Americans are staying at the hotel. They are all "diplomats."

Uh huh. Thirty diplomats right out in the middle of the friggig Bolivian jungle.

We go for a short walk and eat at the only coffee shop in town. Some jerk with a banditino mustache glares at me through the entire meal. He occasionally makes throat-cutting gestures. I get the distinct feeling



**ABOVE: Leopards conducting unpopular house to house search. The bad guys weren't home.**



**ABOVE: "What do we do now?" Leopards' chain of command begins to break down.**

Americans are not quite as welcome here as they are in La Paz.

After dinner the DEA calls us in for a briefing. We are told the operation is the largest anti-drug raid ever attempted, anywhere. Period. We are also told it will be dangerous and that we can go out to the base but not on the actual raid. Dead journalists might cast a pall over any success.

Our arguments — which focus on our time and NBC's money — do not move the DEA agents. Neither they nor the American ambassador will allow us on the raid under any circumstances. The mood is glum in the room afterwards. We decide to try a desperate shot.

Unannounced, we go to the room of the Fiscal, who is in charge of the entire operation. We explain the problem to him and he shrugs. What can I do, he asks?

Maybe if this guy really is as straight as they claim he is something besides money might appeal to him, we think. We explain what the NBC on our camera tags stand for and how we can make him famous the world over, his picture on a hundred million tele-



**Mob forming in Santa Ana village square. Santa Ana's mayor ordered the church bells rung to summon the townspeople.**

vision sets.

Things are suddenly different. He shakes our hands and tells us to go back to our room. A while later a hot DEA agent shows up and calls the American ambassador in La Paz (on a unscrambled line) and tells him angrily that the Fiscal demands we go on the top secret raid.

The ambassador is not happy. He tells the agent to stall by letting us go to the target town, a nothing village called Santa Ana, but to strand us at the perimeter. Under no circumstances are we to go into town.

We smile and the agent stomps out. I step on a scorpion the size of a small Alaskan King crab which was in my bed, and we turn out the lights. "Who's going to baby-sit us once we get there?" someone asks, and we all grin.

There will be no sleep tonight.

The expected knock comes at 0400. We are driven out to the army base along with 15 DEA agents. Each one carries an M16 and a personal handgun. They have all been chosen for not only their experience but for their South American features. Several are former Cuban freedom fighters. They look mean and they look grim.

At the base sleepy-eyed soldiers are grumbling about the surprise formation. We get our first look at the infamous Leopards

as the base commander addresses them. Most appear to be about 17 years old. They are armed with everything from .22s to M1 carbines. What the hell?

We drift off to the side and get an impromptu tour of the base from one of our earlier friends. The base information officer is also eager to impress.

"We rent Trinidad from the Bolivians," he explains. "We're here at their request. Our job is to train the Leopards and provide advice and support. The base is U.S. property, but it is surrounded by a strip of no-man's land guarded by the Bolivian army in order to make it a Bolivian operation."

Right out of the manual. One of my friends (no names here) tells me, "this is silly. America is laying out a fortune here, but we're not allowed to do anything but accompany the locals. If they turned us loose we could kick ass, but you've got these kids paid \$50 a month, and they wonder why every operation gets blown before it gets off the ground."

I mention the ragtag armament sported by the Leopards.

"Yeah, they're on the Bolivian payroll; we can't give them money or weapons directly, so they scrounge up whatever they can come up with on the black market. It's pretty lame."

We are shown the airstrip. An assortment of aircraft is warming up, including an Israeli Arava, a twin-engine German Fokker troop transport and a number of U.S. Army Blackhawk choppers. The latter are armed with door guns and sophisticated hurt systems.

"Not bad," I comment.

"The Hawks, huh, yeah not bad, but we do nothing but play transport for the Leopards. The Blackhawks are really overkill. We're not even supposed to be flying them but so far we haven't been able to train the locals to fly or maintain them. They crash a lot; I bet you guys aren't even allowed to ride in them. Even with our pilots. We're scheduled to pull out next month and leave the Blackhawks to the Bolivians, can you dig it? No way that will happen.

"There's more firepower here than in the rest of the country put together. The pres could stay in power forever with this anti-drug base and a lot of the locals think that's the only reason we're here anyway. Advise and train — have you ever heard anything so stupid?"

I look closely at the speaker. He was probably in sixth grade during Vietnam. "No, I sure haven't." Deja Vu.

The DEA arrives and puts us on the Fokker along with 10 Leopards, a Bolivian pilot and two DEA agents. Once we are airborne they finally fill us in.

"This is the biggest raid ever attempted. We are going to a town called Santa Ana, and we will land at the airport and secure it before proceeding into town. Six Blackhawks, with 60 Leopards, will land at targeted sites and will serve warrants on the top 20 cocaine barons in South America.

(One of the warrants is for the infamous Roberto Surez). We expect these people to have personal armies armed with automatic weapons. The townspeople are considered to be hostile."

Our team leader is "Mark," a DEA pro who had been shot three times and left for dead in Colombia. He turned to us. "You guys stay out of the way and no pictures of me or my guys. Got it?"

We nod. "You know we are not going to stay at the airport."

Mark looks at me. "I don't give a damn where you go, but if I say go — you go then, no excuses, no delays or we leave your ass behind. And you're not allowed on the Blackhawks under any circumstances. Getting back to the plane is your responsibility."

The rest of the flight is spent in quiet reflection. The Leopards mug for our cameras a bit, but they are too nervous for any real fooling around. We are zigzagging to scruff off speed to stay behind the choppers. Mark informs us that nobody had any advance warning of this trip. We expect to catch the SOBs at home, he tells us, adding that the army cannot give us support fire under any circumstances. We are on our own.

The Hawks swarm into the tiny — population 5,000 — town of Santa Ana and disappear from sight. As we touch down a strange thought crosses my mind. Wasn't Santa Ana the name of the guy who trashed the Alamo?

We're on the ground and moving towards the hangar. A crowd of people is already waiting for us on motor bikes and in pickup trucks. Two hot young chicks in full make-up and high heels wave at my partner and me and say something that is lost in the roar of the Fokker shutting down.

High heels? Make-up? It's 0500 and this is the most top-secret anti-drug raid ever launched? Santa Ana must have a hell of a night life.

The DEA-types place the entire airport under house arrest, forbidding anyone to leave. People are starting to yell anti-American sentiments as we commandeer a pickup truck for the two-mile run into town.

As we leave, the Blackhawks with their American crews are settling back at the opposite end of the airport in order to lower the profile of the U.S. presence.

When we get to town a number of things seem to be happening simultaneously.

The DEA-types have arrested and disarmed the entire police department and are holding it against a wall at gun point. Along with the chief of police, who is threatening our lives in Spanish, a Bolivian Air Force colonel has been detained as well.

The officer obviously did not expect us and is damn pissed. I ask myself just what the hell is he doing in this town at this hour? Picking up a little present for the missus?

It soon becomes obvious our visit is hardly news. The local kids start teasing us. They say they knew we were coming the night before. None of the 20 men named on our warrants is home.

Nor, thank God, are their armies.



TOP AND ABOVE: A typical humble hut in the jungle cow town of Santa Ana. Note plane in the garage.

Surprise.

We roll video as the DEA and Leopards mill around in the town square searching houses for a cache of coke. Nothing of interest is found. The populace is getting pissed off at our tactics.

Suddenly the mayor runs out and stands in front of me. He is yelling in Spanish, and his face is turning dark red. A crowd forms to cheer him on. Somehow I don't think this is a good time to toss in my one Spanish phrase, "no habla espanol," so I just nod and smile.

It turns out he is screaming "This is a humiliation. We are not delinquent people. This is an unacceptable military invasion.

Go home."

Then he sends some kids up the church steeple. "Ring the bells," he yells. "Ring the bells." The kids are only too happy to comply, and the rest of the town spills out into the square to see what is going down.

Our contact and camera crew are pulled to one end of the square while we are at the other. Stones are starting to fly from the crowd, and one by one our elite Leopards start to run away. It is apparent that very few of them paid attention during their mob control classes.

One of the DEA agents turns to me with a big smile and says, "It's time to get out of here, now. Just put a big smile on your face and walk with me out of town."

"Wait a minute, I'll go get our crew," I reply. I start to walk off toward the other end of town. A beefy arm around my shoulder



Leopards running toward Fokker, after the mayor of Santa Ana agreed to let them leave.

stops me.

"No, they're on their own. We've worn out our welcome. Let's go." And he steers me over to my partner and two other agents.

"But..."

He is smiling. "No buts. They know the deal. Smile at me." A rock sails close by, and I notice the crowd is forming up behind us under the direction of a couple of outspoken leaders.

We begin the two-mile walk back to the airport, passing private homes with Lear jets in their garages. They look like they have been taken from Dallas, Texas and plunked down here in the middle of the jungle. Electrified chain fences surround other mansions, and guard dogs run alongside of us. I hear the mayor yelling, "There is no drug money here, just cattle. Just cattle money."

At this point the only two cows we will see on the entire trip pass us by. They are emaciated.

The mob is catching up with us. They are now yelling the traditional "Hang the Yankee motherfuckers!" and expressing other sentiments out of the anti-American handbook. A rock hits my DEA friend in the head.

He wipes blood away and locks and loads his M16. "It's going down now, and I want you to know I'm going to shoot some people before they take us, okay?" He is still smiling.

Never get involved with a story. Stay aloof. Report.

"Is that a Glock in your belt?" I ask. I'm smiling also, but the legs are starting to get that familiar watery feeling.

He looks at me surprised. "Uh huh, can you use a Glock?"

"I sure can," big smile now. The crowd is running behind us raising a cloud of dust. He reaches to his belt and touches the pistol.



Head Leopard detailing raid, 0400, Trinidad Bolivia.

"Good, you may get your chance in about ten seconds."

Suddenly three motor bikes come roaring up towards us from the direction of the airport. They are ridden by uniformed Bolivian Air Force Officers. One is a general.

Great, a little more firepower on our side.

They burn past us and flip us the finger. Oh no.

The bikes turn around in front of us, and the

general pulls his piece and aims it at us. "Pig fuckers," he yells and guns his bike at us.

"Now," Mark yells and drops to his knees. I decide the muddy ditch by the side of the road looks very appealing and dive into it. The bikes speed by us without shooting after the DEA shoulder their rifles.

It comes to light later that the general flew in to see his old friend the colonel in town, and pick up, oh, who knows what? We have spoiled his whole day, and he'd like to see us dead.

We pick up the pace; the airport is in sight. We can see the Leopard contingent we left behind to secure the airfield is falling apart. Several lay down their weapons and run. Mark aims his rifle at a couple and orders them to hold the field or he will shoot.

Jesus! These are our guys? Suddenly a Leopard opens fire with his polished M1 at the crowd. Mark kicks his carbine away and hits him. Other shots are fired both to and from the crowd.

We break for the Fokker at the end of the field as a Leopard fires a grenade at the crowd. Women and kids fall down screaming. Time has completely stopped. I can see every frame flipping by in slow motion.

"Good God, what was that, gas or frag?" I yell over the motors as we reach the plane.

"Who knows?" one of the agents covering our retreat yells back. The Leopards are gone.

At our pre-raid briefing the DEA explained that contingency plans were in place to get the prisoners we expected to take out of the area and to La Paz before they could bribe their way out of custody. Even if we don't get any prisoners the raid will be a success, we are assured, because it will show America is out to stop international drug trafficking and pursue the bad guys where they live.

Separated from our camera crew and our Leopards, I ask Mark, the DEA commander, what our contingency plan is? Mark

**BELOW: Blackhawks about to disperse mob with their prop wash. Choppers had to get the crowd off the runway before the Fokker could take off.**



was a rock. He had been cool and was still holding together what pieces of the operation remained. "I got no fucking idea!" was not the answer I was hoping to hear.

My partner, Mark and I scramble on board the warm Fokker.

More shots are fired, Mark signals the pilot to take off. We race to the end of the runway and turn into the wind.

"Behind us!" I yell, "they're blocking the runway." Trucks full of angry and armed townspeople are spilling onto both ends of the runway.

"Shit! We can't take off and leave our troops!" Mark yells back at me.

"What about our crew?" my partner asks.

"They're on their own. We're dead if we go back into town now." Mark tosses his M16 to us and rushes to the cabin to talk to the pilot. The crowd has now blocked the runway with their bodies. We can hear shouts of "Kill them!" drifting down with the wind.

The mob surges toward the plane. We can still hear what sounds like gunshots. Both my partner and I are eating the Fokker floor. It dawns on me that at least the DEA are getting paid for this; I'm here for fun.

The Bolivian pilot jumps from his seat and rushes to throw open the plane door to the crowd. He is yelling something in Spanish. "NO!" Mark yells and pulls his pistol. The first members of the mob burst into the plane.

The moment of truth seems to have arrived. I seem to be shaking but I'll be damned if I go down without a fight. I reach over to pick up the M16 which has been set on rock and roll and left behind.

Even as I do this I realize that the plane is too narrow to shoot the bad guys without taking out Mark and the pilot in the same burst. The leaders are aiming their pistols in our direction.

In this same split second Peter hears part of what is being yelled and literally sits on the loose M16. The mayor jumps aboard and marches back toward us with his little group of body guards. He makes a speech in Spanish and they search the plane. He has offered us a face-saving escape; he will let us leave if we have no prisoners aboard.

As he races past me he reaches down to where I am lying and shakes my hand. "Come back again," he says in passable English.

The man has a sense of humor.

Even after the mayor and his friends depart, the mob mills around. There is some doubt as to whether it will be satisfied with his explanation. Blood is running high.

The crowd opens to let our Leopards come running through. They throw their weapons, safeties off, to me, and we help pull them on board. We are still missing our camera crew and one Leopard. The crowd is still on the runway, and tempers are hot.

"Get the fucking choppers up to clear the fucking runway!" I scream.

"Good idea," Mark yells back and raises his 2 watt Motorola walkie-talkie.



**TOP: Mob running from helicopters. President Reagan's war on drugs was not being won here today.**

**ABOVE: One of the two emaciated cows which were the only cattle visible in Santa Ana. Santa Ana's income came from cattle, not drugs, the mayor said.**

He can't reach the choppers parked two miles away.

"Shit!" He tries again and finally gets through. The Blackhawks sweep the crowd, and the prop-wash scatters it enough so we can take off.

Back at Trinidad the DEA types mill around talking about how this incident has queered their act and how there will be hell to pay back in the states. Mark suggests we send our chartered Bolivian pilot back to get what's left of our crew, because we sure as hell aren't going back for some time. Luckily, it turns out the cameramen managed to get on board one of the overloaded Blackhawks. I never thought I'd hug a grown man in daylight.

At the DEA Hilton in Trinidad we get a cheering reception with the exception of one blond agent who can't be a day over 19. "Were you guys on the Santa Ana thing?" he asks.

We fill him in. "Oh shit, this is my first

day here. What if my mother back in the States hears about this?" I am too tired to answer.

We fly back to La Paz, hire a hotel room, some equipment and cut the video. It is fed up to the bird, and we make the six o'clock news around the world. NBC calls the president of Pan Am to get us on the next (booked up) flight out of the country. I am left wondering where the thin line between covering the news and becoming part of it leaves off.

*Follow up —*

*The Bolivian President insists that the mayor of Santa Ana will be removed for his part in the insurrection (as my partner says, "He'd better send more than 70 Leopards in to do the job.") and the United States claims it will stop the growing flow of coca from Bolivia.*

*A few months later we give up and all American troops are removed from Bolivia. There is a major cut in American aid. The price of coca leaves in the field is rising again.*

*Moral of the story? I don't know, maybe it's that money talks, power grows from the barrel of a gun, and the little guy always gets screwed.*

*Or maybe it's just keep your head down and smile whenever possible. ☒*

**SOF CENTRAL AMERICA**

# OPERATION OLIVERO

## SOF Joins Contra Attack on Nicaragua's Golden Triangle

Text & Photos by Steve Salisbury

**O**PERATION Olivero. If everything went well, it would be the greatest blow the Nicaraguan Resistance, commonly known as *contras*, had delivered to the Soviet-backed, Marxist Sandinista regime in Managua. The plan was to take over three gold-mining towns, La Luz-Siuna, Bonanza and Rosita, in the northeastern part of the country.

According to Enrique Bermudez Varela, commander-in-chief of the 15,000-man Nicaraguan Resistance Army, Northern Front (known by its Spanish acronym ERN-FN), the *contras* were taking their best shot, mobilizing roughly 7,000 troops. Three thousand of them were in the attack forces, with the rest involved with support, logistics, diversionary actions, and missions to block enemy reinforcements.

It was 19 December, the night before the assault, and so far everything was going well for the roughly 400 troops I was accompanying. I was the lone journalist to cover the taking of La Luz-Siuna, the largest of the three towns with a population



of about 10,000. Despite the four-week near starvation trek from the Coco River frontier with Honduras, plodding through virgin jungle bent under heavy knapsacks of ammo, we had remained undetected by the Sandinistas. Also undetected were the 600 Liberty Commandos, as the rebels like to call themselves, marching on the town from the south.

Now Rigoberto, commander of regional command force *Jorge Salazar I*, and Mack, commander of *Nicarao*, had deployed their battalion-sized forces in the verdant hills five clicks from town, and we shivered in wet cammies in the cold mist. We lay on rain

Contra troops in central Zelaya province, some 200 kilometers south of Honduran border, headed for area of operations in Chontales province. Trooper to left carries H&K 40mm *Granatpistole* grenade launcher. Trooper to right totes a Combloc RPG-7. Contra troops roam the eastern half of Nicaragua, border to border. Much of Zelaya province, the largest in Nicaragua, is controlled by the Resistance forces.

ponchos of broad banana leaves which we spread along the trail we had hacked through the bush. I don't think any of us could really sleep, but I was mesmerized by the soft blue and yellow lights twinkling in town.

Several troops quietly cleaned their AKM assault rifles. They had field-stripped them

### SOF'S GROUND-POUNGING SCRIBE

Steve Salisbury has gone frequently into the line of fire, covering Central America's conflicts over the last seven years. Few foreign correspondents have spent as much time there. Salisbury is familiar to SOF readers; he has published over two dozen features for the magazine. The taking of La Luz-Siuna was one of the fiercest battles he has witnessed. He came within a whisker of becoming one more casualty there.

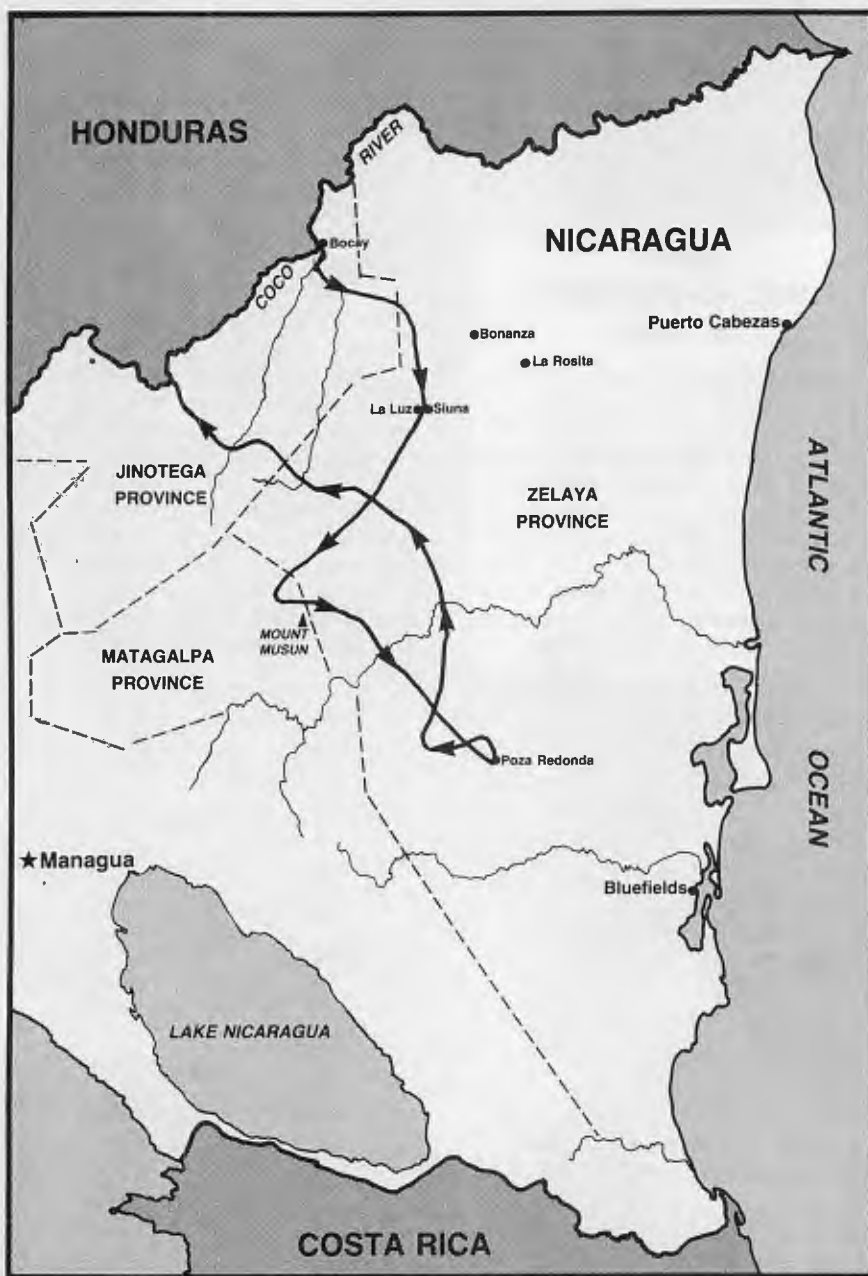
so many times before that it was no problem to do it in the dark. Otherwise there was nothing to do, except wait and agonize over the vicious house-to-house bloodletting that would begin in the morning, and almost surely slaughter or maim many of us.

Townsppeople were whooping it up at a late-night Christmas fiesta. So was a clique of off-duty Sandinista officers and enlisted men, oblivious to the impending mayhem in store for them.

**BOOM, BOOM, BOOM! DA-DA-DA-DA-DAT!** The early morning tranquility was shattered at 0440 by a tremendous volume of fire from contras attacking the south part of town. The incessant pounding of rocket-propelled grenades amidst the rolling crescendo of automatic weapons fire gave the surreal sensation of a thunder and lightning storm without rain. Rigoberto pressed an Icom walkie-talkie to his chin, which was covered by gray stubble that made him seem a decade older than his 33 years, and shouted orders as fast as a Tommy gun.







Map of author's five-month trek with contras, into their area of operations against the Sandinistas.

"Let's go!" he bellowed, pulling on his black cap with white block letters stating "PROPERTY OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS." I followed the slightly paunchy commander and his men along an overgrown jungle path.

"Who the hell was lighting fires last night?" he asked in a growl as a knot of commandos entangled in vines slowed our progress near a group of still-smoldering campfires. No one answered. Rigo swung his long fatty arms and prodded his men forward.

We climbed and descended hills at the pace of a cross-country runner, clumsily crossing streams by hopping over slippery stones. Fatigue overtook many of us. Some men rested occasionally, and fell behind as our disjointed Indian file continued, swerving from side to side up the winding trail like a hungry serpent slithering in pursuit of its prey.

Others who weren't halted by fatigue were delayed by dysentery, caught a couple days before at a peasant's shack, probably

from gorging on undercooked pork. I, too, was forced to stop every several hundred meters, sling off my 40-pound knapsack, unbuckle my web belt, and yank down my baggy pants to relieve myself. The next thing I knew, I found myself alone on the trail. HE blasts acted as my compass and, huffing and puffing, scaling muddy slopes, I rejoined Rigoberto and his security escort under a canopy of chilemate trees which blocked the view from La Luz-Siuna.

Daybreak had come about an hour and a half before, and Rigoberto dispatched a couple of U.S.-trained commandos armed with American Redeye shoulder-fired AA missiles to clearings on nearby hilltops, in positions to shoot down the Sandinistas' fearsome "flying tanks," the Soviet-made Mi-24 Hind D helicopter gunships, or any other hostile aircraft. Ten other missilemen

took positions and kept watch for the green-and-brown cammied "fat boys," as the guerrillas call the choppers, and the familiar thud of their rotor blades.

But no helicopters would come. The contras had downed several over the last years and the Sandinistas respected the Redeye's deadly efficiency. They must have guessed the rebels had the Redeyes ready for them.

The echos of gunfire and explosions swelled as guerrillas of Task Force *Chontales*, lead by Alfa Lima, shot their way into La Luz-Siuna's western barrios. The Sandinistas retreated into the sanctuary of the town and a brief lull in the battle ensued.

Jorbin, the hefty radio operator and S-5 of the Jorge Salazar I, had just set the long antenna to his SC130 Southcom radio and informed Rigoberto that Strategic Command was on the horn. He took the mike from Jorbin's thick, powerful hand.

"We have taken 95 percent of our objective," he reported optimistically. As he spoke, a half-smile crossed the white, Castilian-featured face of this former cattle rancher who had joined the Resistance seven years ago because of "the Sandinistas' Marxist-Leninist inspired confiscation of private property and repression of Nicaraguan society."

That Rigoberto's report was premature was soon proven by renewed flurries of fierce gunfire.

Jorbin packed up his radio and we lumbered ahead. We waded waist deep through the stiff current of a muddy river. The jungle gave way to farmland and we passed unpainted, decrepit wooden houses built on stilts above the grassy ground as protection from the flash floods common during the rainy season. Shoeless *campesinos*, dressed in mottled, tattered clothes, sat or stood on porches or in doorways, watching us curiously. Maybe they never saw contras before. I know they never had seen a gringo in uniform until I appeared. We waved and smiled. Their bewildered expressions changed to smiles and they waved back.

A chain of hills blocked our view of La Luz-Siuna, but we could see a large pall of black smoke billowing from the hills east of town where insurgents had overrun a detachment of soldiers, and blown up three Soviet-installed radars that the Sandinistas were using to monitor contra communications and detect rebel resupply flights.

Our path merged with a muddy road. We trudged up the middle of it, throwing caution to the wind. Some troops briefly stopped at houses along the roadside where peasants cheerfully gave them chunks of cheese and soft corn tortillas.

"Here," said a young troopie breathlessly, handing me a fistful of cheese after running back into line.

"*Gracias*," I answered and gobbled the crumbling, salty, moist white mass. It was the first food I had eaten since yesterday afternoon.

We departed from the road and climbed a hill. La Luz-Siuna came into view a couple clicks away. Damn, I thought in dis-

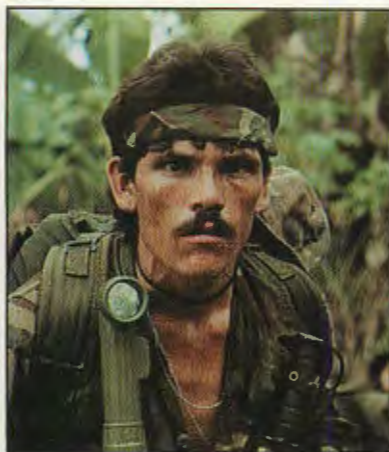
couragement, we've walked all this way and we have all that distance to go.

A good portion of the town's small, mostly tin-roofed wooden houses were built along the slopes of several hills — not advantageous terrain for our assaulting forces. We would have to fight uphill almost every step. La Luz-Siuna comprised two towns which had grown together, and were joined into one municipality.

Along a ridgeline where the sprawl of La Luz ends and the sprawl of Siuna begins, were Sandinista fortifications where a considerable number of the estimated 300 to 600 government troops stationed in La Luz-Siuna were making a stand.

Rigoberto and Mack called for the light artillery to be readied. As the commandos hurriedly unloaded the pieces of a U.S.-made 81mm and its ammo, a Sandinista howitzer was pounding the hell out of the rebel positions in the hills to the south. Our mortar fire, spotted by Commander Alpha Lima over the walkie-talkie, silenced it, then the tube team lobbed their arcs of death and destruction at the remaining Sandinista strongholds.

With an AK strapped to his waist, a brow-



**ABOVE:** Fragua, Resistance field commander, at Siuna. Two months later he had half his face blown off in central Nicaragua.

**BELOW:** Resistance task force commander Alfa Lima crosses a log ahead of his men in central Zelaya province in late January. These guerrillas were well on their way to their area of operations, some 300 kilometers south of the Honduran border.

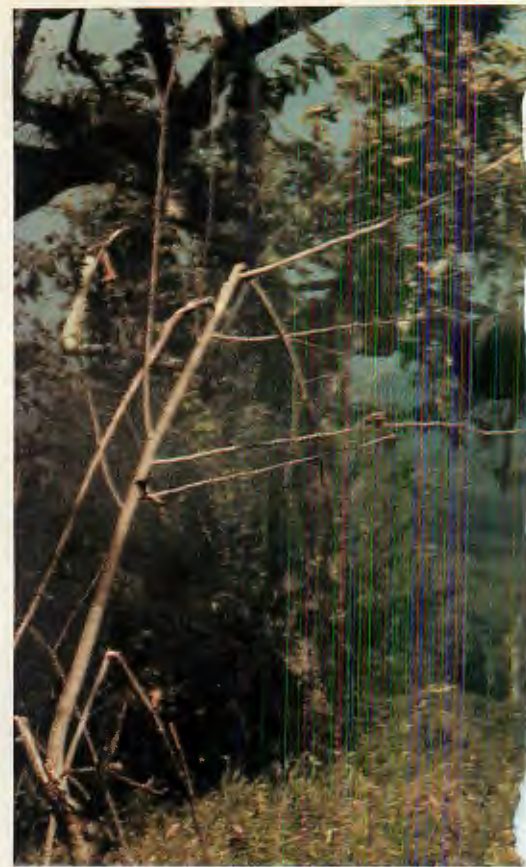
ny, bearded commando with dark caterpillar eyebrows stood beside a tree and fired a couple of rounds from a 57mm recoilless rifle braced between his neck and right shoulder, then it refused to respond when he pulled the trigger on the next round. Ignoring bullets whirring overhead, his sinewy assistant opened the breech and replaced the shell with the ease of a baker taking a loaf of bread from the oven and putting new dough in its place. But the weapon misfired again. The assistant replaced the rounds two or three more times, still the RR wouldn't fire. The gunner was flustered. "Bad projectiles, bad projectiles," he stammered tensely "They're wet."

"Put a no!" shouted someone over the din. "The weapon's decalibrated. Don't you know how the hell to fix it?!"

"Come on!" yelled Rigoberto. "There's no time to argue. Let's move."

We advanced to a hill shaped like an inverted double chin. Rigoberto led some men to one knoll, and a roving field commander with a hatchet face and the *nom de guerre* Snake led the recoilless rifle team and about 15 other guerrillas to the other. Relocated in the saddle between, the mortar





**ABOVE:** Contras fire 57mm recoilless rifle at Siuna to soften up some harder targets.



**BELOW:** Sitting on horse with peasant is 23-year-old contra with nom de guerre *Napoleon*, who defected from Sandinista army in 1981 to work as illegal alien in Hollywood Boulevard hamburger stand. He returned to Central America in 1983 to join the contras. Peasants frequently lend mules and horses to the contras, particularly to transport their sick and wounded.

crew resumed their fire. The recoilless rifle was recalibrated and resumed fire, too.

But some of the men with Snake grew antsy. "Hey, we're too far away," complained one, referring to the fact that we were no closer than a kilometer from town. "We ain't doing dick."

"Ay, puta!" exclaimed Snake in agreement, swinging his Icom walkie-talkie by its rubber strap, "we're missing the good shit. Let's assault and drive those fuckers out dick to dick." His black eyes glinted coldly like polished onyx; his dark wavy hair was held back with a headband torn from an olive-green T-shirt.

Snake radioed Rigoberto and received permission to enter town. Some men didn't want to go. Snake had a reputation of being crazy and the chances of getting hurt were very high; they stayed behind. However, about ten men continued with him, including me.

Rigoberto saw me leaving and shouted and motioned for me to join him. He was truly worried about my safety. And he knew that if the Sandinistas captured a gringo dead or alive, they could create a scandal

**TOP:** Contra commander *Snake* fires Soviet-made PKM in assault on Sandinista positions.

**ABOVE:** Fifteen-year-old trooper Little Cricket (lower right-hand corner, wearing SOF patch). He was later wounded in knee.

and use it to turn a military defeat into a propaganda victory.

But *someone* had to take photos of the insurgents in town to prove they took it. And I didn't hump for weeks through jungle infested with venomous snakes and malaria-carrying mosquitos just to photograph mortars and recoilless rifles being fired. I waved to Rigo and shouted to a trooper in the cleft, who was ordered to fetch me, that I'd be back shortly.

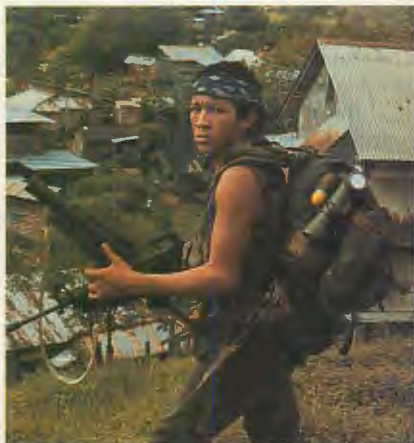
The sun had broken through the clouds and was shining hot. As we sweated and panted, having just reached the summit of another hill, we heard the low drone of a prop-driven plane.

"*Canduche* (pronounced cahn-DOOchay), *Canduche!*" warned a slim young rebel, pointing to the partly clear, azure sky. I blocked out the sun with my





**BELOW:** Contra with H&K *Granatpistole* and CAR-15 continues the advance into Siuna.



**BELOW:** Contra attends to dying comrade who was shot in the face during battle. If mortally wounded this far from medical attention, the lucky ones die quickly.



hand and saw a wedge-shaped silver speck flying our way at about 15,000 feet, out of range of our Redeyes. The contras generically called Soviet-made AN-12, AN-26 and IL-76 transport planes, which the Sandinista also use for bombing and reconnaissance missions, *Canduches*, derived from the IL-76's call-name *Candid*.

We hid in the tall grass, reclining on our knapsacks, holding our breath and praying it wouldn't bomb us. I remembered a weeping woman embracing the lifeless body of her five-year-old daughter, and bloody old men, women, children and contras being evacuated in boats — all victims of cluster bombs dropped by a squadron of *Canduches* last 7 October on contra encampments and Nicaraguan refugee settlements along the Honduran banks of the Coco River. One contra and three children were killed that day and 25 were wounded, mostly civilians.

I sighed in relief when no ordnance dropped from the plane as it passed over. However, it was getting a fix on contra positions and a few minutes later it or another *Canduche* rained high explosives on the hills east of town. The hollow rumble of the rolling blasts echoed melodiously through the valleys above the battle's cacaphony, to warn us that our hill could be next. It was the first of several sorties the Sandinistas would fly throughout the day. They were ineffectual in beating us back, but they reportedly caused civilian casualties on the other side of town.

"Let's let dick fly," shouted Snake. He exchanged his AKM for a PKM machine gun another trooper was toting, and we descended to a stream at the bottom of a ravine, jumped it and carefully stepped through a barbed-wire fence, with troopers in sequence lifting the top strand so that the following man wouldn't be snared. My heart was pounding so hard I thought it would punch through my chest. If Sandinistas were in the houses uphill, they could murder us.

We climbed to a plateau and passed a burning house and water tower. We followed a water pipe, staying cautiously near a sewage ditch running parallel to it, for a place to dive in case of attack, and arrived at a row of shacks leading into town. Ducking under clotheslines where ragged pants and shirts swayed in the breeze, and dodging pigs and chickens, we almost stumbled into a trench where a teenage boy in civilian clothes cowered in terror.

"Here's a *piri*!" shouted Snake, flailing his left arm while cradling the PKM against his hip with his right. *Piri* (pronounced PEEree) is short for *piricoaco*, a derogatory term the contras use for the Sandinistas which means yapping dog. "You're a *piri*, no?"

"N-n-no. No! I-I-I'm nothing," stammered the terrified boy. His watery black

**LEFT:** Even as firefights raged a few blocks away, townspeople wanted to talk to the contras; when the shooting stopped they plied them with food and thanks.



eyes looked like drops of oil as he uncurling from his fetal position.

Snake didn't believe him. "I should shoot you," he barked. "Ah, fuck it. Get out of my face." He waved the boy to leave and we pressed on into town.

At a dirt road, which was an unnamed main street, dozens of civilians fraternized with the contras, seemingly oblivious to the fighting in *barrios* as near as a hundred meters up the street. They were curious to meet the commandos. It was the first time many had seen the contras in person.

Some commandos who had left civilian life in La Luz-Siuna years ago to join the contras now joyfully embraced loved ones in tearful reunions. There seemed to be no end to the food the smiling townspeople lavished on the rebels.

However, civilians wounded in the cross-fire weren't grinning. A young guerrilla told me he counted 20 wounded civilians, several individually, carried in vehicles, or on the backs of others, through his checkpoint en route to the government-owned hospital. Wounded Sandinistas were also receiving treatment there. However, rebels didn't enter, respecting the wishes of Nicaraguan Red Cross workers and doctors.

That didn't stop a commando who had his jaw blown away by the Sandinistas in combat a couple of years ago from firing a full-auto burst at a government trooper carrying his wounded buddy. The guerrilla, bitter for what the Sandinistas had done to his face, boasted of the incident over the

**TOP: Nicaraguan freedom fighter firing at Sandinistas about 20 meters away, at bend in the road in Siuna.**

**ABOVE: Contra troops, 16-year-old girl right, after the taking of Siuna. Many women fight in the ranks of the Resistance.**

next few weeks, but it was unclear if he had shot or just scared them.

In a crude turquoise-painted chapel across the road, a couple of dozen people huddled in prayer, sitting on splintered pews. Noticing the strangers at the doorway, a small swarthy man greeted us. "Could you please be sure nothing happens to the church," he politely requested. I couldn't help but notice the unimportant fact that his jet black hair was perfectly combed.

"No, we won't let anything happen to the church," reassured a commando. "But you can't trust the piris; they could shoot at it."

More congregation members came outside and eagerly spoke with us. They were very critical of the Sandinistas. Their salaries weren't enough to survive on, they complained. The prices were too high. They were becoming poorer and poorer. And even if they had enough money, often the goods weren't to be found. "There's no sugar, no soap," sputtered an old lady. They bitterly denounced the Sandinistas' rationing policy and universal forced military service for men between the decreed ages of 17 and 40 (those from 26 to 40

theoretically to go to the active reserves), but which in practice included boys as young as 13, and elderly men.

A middle-aged woman stared at me. Nodding at me, she said to a cute teenage girl who could have been her daughter: "Look, the *Machos* have come to get rid of the Sandinistas. Thank God! We're going to be saved." (*Machos* in Nicaraguan parlance means the 'fair-haired, light-skinned ones' or, in this case, the Americans.)

"No, no, I'm a journalist," I answered, returning the smiles of the people who asked me hopefully if I were part of an American invasion, noticing my uniform and gear.

Ever since I began infiltrating into Nicaragua with the contras in 1983, the people everywhere have been friendly and warm to me, belying the Sandinista propaganda that Nicaraguans hate Americans who support the contras. And La Luz-Siuna was no exception. Old and young men gave me firm, enthusiastic handshakes; kids hugged my legs; and women embraced me. It gave me a taste of what it must have felt like for the American GIs who liberated France in World War II.

I would have loved to continue chatting with the warm, friendly folks at the chapel, but we had to get back to battle.

Snake led us brazenly up the road, taunting the Sandinistas to open fire at us and expose their positions.

"Hey, did you check out that chick at the church," asked Montatoro, a young bearded former Sandinista wearing a Civilian Military Assistance T-shirt and one of the few contras I saw carrying an M16. "She looked real good to me. How would you like to chase *her* through town?"

"I think it's better that you try to keep your mind on chasing piris here instead of dreaming," I replied offhandedly.

It appeared the gritty troops of task force commander Alfa Lima had pretty much cleared the *barrios* to our right by running house to house, wall to wall, and post to post, chucking hand grenades where the piris were hiding. Dead piris were scavenged for loaded AK magazines to conserve contra ammo. About a dozen piris were holding up in a bunker. According to the contras, the white house above it was the piris' headquarters. The white house was now virtually obliterated and it was hard to see how the Sandinistas in the bunker could survive the incessant pounding of the RPG and LAW rockets fired through the cracks and openings. But after each blast, muffled in the box of earth, some recalcitrant SOB would start firing back like the Charlies in their holes in 'Nam would keep taking potshots at you, until you sucked the life out of him with a napalm strike.

Troops from the Nicaraao hooked up with us and we were determined to sweep the northern neighborhoods clean of all pockets of resistance. But we had barely advanced 50 meters near a bend in the road when the troops behind me started blasting away from the hip in full-auto. It was John Wayne time. "There they go, there they go,"

shouted Montatoro. "There's the piris!" The boys continued letting their rifles rip, burning their barrels and making more noise than an AC/DC rock concert.

"Cut that crap out," Snake shouted, waving at us like a mad football coach. "Those could be our men!"

He had just bellowed those last words when Sandinistas at a house 20 meters away at a two-o'clock angle put the lie to that possibility, opening up at us with a murderous volley. We had no time to hit the dirt; we instinctively blasted back with twice the vengeance and volume of fire. I had been fumbling with my camera when the piris' 7.62 streaked so close by my body that I could almost feel its heat, and I dropped the Pentax.

Through a blur of dust I saw hedges and bushes shake as they were battered by the bullets. The exchange lasted seconds, but it seemed like a lifetime. I dropped to my knees in the shallow roadside ditch, painfully aware that our reckless lack of concern for security was coming back to haunt us, though relieved that our opponents had ceased their fire. The commandos were now squatting, crouching or kneeling where they could find cover, too. Only Snake was standing, still hip-firing his PKM with the ammo belt dragging in the dust. He wanted to silence our attackers once and for all. But they would attack us again in only a matter of minutes. Buey, our pointman and husky veteran of many battles, sensed danger and hesitated as Culebra ordered him to advance. Snake blew his cork, screaming every insult in the Spanish language: "You faggot. You asshole, get your ass moving."

"But the piris are just around the corner," Buey stammered with a soleful expression on his round, mustachioed white face, dotted with black dachshund eyes.

"I don't give a shit," retorted Snake, now furiously kicking his man. "Let's kick their ass or I'll kick yours."

Buey got up and started walking forward cautiously. Snake, in his impatience, passed him. I followed two or three men as they trailed him. As we were turning the corner, we walked into another hailstorm of fire. I ducked between a couple of houses and found the Nicarao troops attending a trooper who had been shot in the face during our first square off a few minutes earlier. The teenage boy with classic Indian features lay dying. The slug had entered the high arch of his left cheekbone and gone into his brain. His eyes were rolled back and looked strangely as if they were replaced with white marbles. But he was faintly breathing. A short commando with an elf-like face and a Dr. J afro massaged his chest, and the kid looked into the sky for what would be one of the last sights he would see. Another trooper helped lift him onto the shoulders of the guy with the 'fro, who then carried him to the rear where, I heard later, he died. Another contra had been wounded in that exchange, but he had already been evacuated.

I tried to rejoin Snake's advance, but as I re-emerged on the bend in the road I found

## TALE OF TWO CITIES

The other mining town of Bonanza, some 30 kilometers northeast of La Luz-Siuna, was taken by a couple of rebel regional commands and held for nearly two days. Rosita, the third and easternmost town of the mineral triangle, was partially occupied by contra troops for a few hours.

Sandinista dictator Daniel Ortega was stunned by the drubbing of his troops and probably even more disturbed by the warm welcomes that townspeople gave the resistance fighters. On the Voice of Nicaragua, a state-owned radio station, Ortega refused to admit any of the mining towns fell and claimed his soldiers killed over 100 contras, repulsing the onslaught. According to my tabulations, based on reports from participating rebel field commanders and troops, overall on Operation Olivero between 20 and 30 freedom fighters were killed, and probably no more than twice that number wounded.

Ortega claimed the Sandinistas suffered only 50 casualties, almost evenly divided between dead and wounded, in the three towns altogether. However, commandos who listened to Ortega's broadcast the day after the attack said that figure probably more accurately reflects the number of casualties the Sandinistas suffered in La Luz-Siuna alone.

Perhaps more important than inflicting casualties on the Sandinista security forces and wreaking havoc on their war machine, was the fact that the resistance proved its ability to seize a series of strategic towns in a coordinated attack involving thousands of men.

If only the U.S. Congress would see fit to approve sufficient military aid to the Nicaraguan resistance, maybe they could take the capital of Managua one day, and Nicaragua's nightmare of communist tyranny would end.

myself alone and the target of a sniper. The first couple of shots weren't even near me and I didn't think I was the one being shot at. But the following shots cracked overhead too close for comfort and I knew if I kept loitering on that dogleg, I would end up on the news, with the Sandinistas gloating about the death of a *Yanqui periodista*. I ducked behind the houses again, my ears ringing from the rippling explosions of hand-grenades thrown in quick succession, and beat feet back to the relative safety of the street celebration behind the chapel. I looked up the road and was surprised to see Snake hobbling toward me. He was shot in the same knee which had been wounded a couple years earlier. I ran to his aid, throwing his arm around my shoulders and helping him walk. "We killed four of those sons-of-bitches," he reported, a smile briefly replacing his grimace of pain. "The rest

of the piris ran off. Thanks, I can manage now." He limped without my support to a gaggle of troops where someone bandaged his wound.

Commandos and civilians attended another wounded rebel lying on a rain-poncho hammock by the side of the road. He also had been shot in the face. He would not die, but would lose the sight in one eye. Jackson (many contras like to use English names as their nom de guerre), a 17-year old combat paramedic who looked ten years older in his Abe Lincoln beard, instructed the civilians how to treat the wound. He couldn't do it himself because he was badly wounded in the hand.

"Do what you want with the truck," I overheard a small, dark man with wire-rimmed glasses telling several rebels. "I was just driving it." This was the same fellow who came to greet Snake and me when we walked into town. He was babbling something about his pick-up truck then, but I didn't catch it. It turned out that our boys found AK magazines in its cab and townspeople told us that it was property of State Security, used to round up the local youth for obligatory military service.

"I'm going to blow it with a grenade," said Impactante, a Roberto Duran look-alike. However, his overthrown toss only blew out its windshield. Other troops then set it aflame.

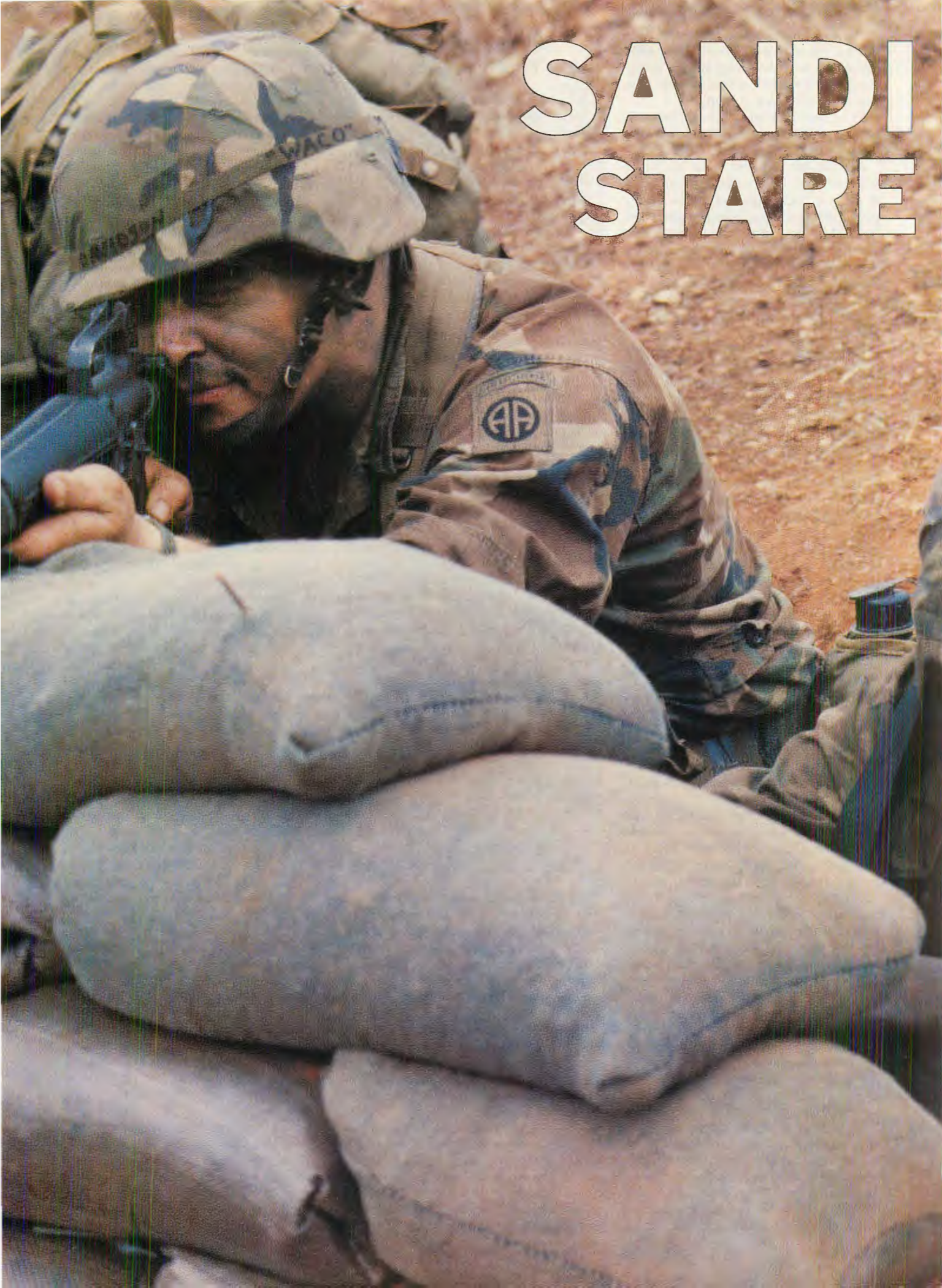
The boys did nothing to the driver. He was an old man. There were many men of fighting age dressed in civilian clothes, a good part of whom probably were somehow involved with the Sandinistas, but who thought it better to blend in with the crowd and fake being a contra supporter for a day than to be a dead Sandinista forever. Civilians, usually women, would take rebels aside and identify Sandinistas and their collaborators. Alfa Lima's troops alone rounded up a couple dozen men. They were enlisted to carry the wounded, knapsacks and other heavy gear, but were free to leave over the next few days.

It had become overcast again and started to rain. I followed the wounded being carried in hammocks to a shack. We found shelter from the torrential downpour under the straw-thatched overhang of the porch. Scrawny, poorly-clothed kids with bloated bellies played on the dirt floor near where three wounded were lying. The wounded shivered and groaned, but didn't speak. There were no painkillers for them. The paramedic with most of the medicine in his knapsack lost it when a civilian who had been carrying the pack for him disappeared in the confusion of battle. There were a couple of doctors in the hills with Rigoberto, but there was no way we could reach them now.

A young mother breast-feeding a baby ranted about how the Sandinistas have destroyed Nicaragua. "They've only brought us hunger and misery," she sputtered. "For every fifteen days MICOIN rations us a

*Continued on page 84*

# SANDI STARE



# NISTA DOWN

## SOF HONDURAS

### RDF Cools Ortega's Invasion

Text & Photos by Gene Scroft

**T**HE spearhead of the 2,000-man invasion force crossed the border at dawn and quickly set out to destroy guerrilla bases located inside the sanctuary of a neighboring country. This communist army, the largest ever assembled in the region, had pushed the guerrillas from their in-country positions with the aid of Soviet-supplied Mi-24 helicopter gunships and AN-26 transports converted for use as bombers.

The guerrillas were in trouble. With nowhere else to go they were making a last stand along a river only a few kilometers from their main resupply base. Outnumbered and coming under fire from 122mm howitzers and 107mm mortars firing white phosphorus rounds, the guerrillas had little chance of protecting their vital supplies, and no aid could be expected from the country providing sanctuary because it didn't want to take unilateral action against such a powerful invader.

This presented the United States with a serious dilemma. It wanted to save the guerrillas from a major defeat and wanted to support the invaded country, which it regards as a valuable ally, but it also needed to avoid direct participation in a conflict which could be extremely unpopular at home.

Sounds like the plot of a Tom Clancy novel, doesn't it? It's not. These are the events that prompted President Reagan to deploy units from the 82nd Airborne Division and the 7th Infantry Division (Light) to Honduras in March. These troops were sent as a show of force against the Nicaraguan Sandinistas who had invaded Honduras in an attempt to knock out guerrilla supply bases only days before a scheduled peace conference between Managua and the contras.

Emboldened by this approximately 3,200-man deployment, Honduran Air Force assets attacked Sandinista positions just inside Nicaragua with Super Mystere and F-5 fighters. One of these attacks was conducted against a Sandinista landing zone at the confluence of the Coco and Bocay rivers, where American intelligence had pinpointed six communist helicopters. Unfortunately, all but one of the helicopters had departed before the attack. The one tardy Mi-24 gunship left on the landing zone disintegrated under a Honduran maelstrom.

#### SOF'S INTREPID PERIODISTA

Upon completion of his recent exclusive series of articles on the Philippines for SOF, Gene Scroft hustled back to Central America to cover what turned out to be the very short-lived Nicaraguan invasion of Honduras last March. This is his report on the role played by U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces in quickly and decisively discouraging the Sandinistas' bad habit of entering Honduras without visas or passports.

Scroft, a West Pointer who served with the 75th Rangers and 82nd Airborne, continues to pound ground for SOF in the Middle East, Central America, Afghanistan — and wherever the action is.

M249 SAW from the business end.



This attack, along with the simultaneous U.S. deployment, forced the *comandantes* in Managua to re-evaluate the situation. Being the pragmatists only Lenin could love, they quickly decided to beat feet back to Nicaragua. Of course they saturated the area with antipersonnel mines before they left as a reminder

of their visit. I'm sure the dirt-poor farmers and their families who live in the area appreciated this gesture. Where are the human rights vigilantes when you really need them?

Deployment of troops from the 82nd and 7th was a master stroke, an example of modern "gunboat diplomacy" at its best.

## ADVENTURES OF A GRINGO PERIODISTA

I knew I was about to die. No doubt about it, I was a dead man. Traveling at warp speed over rough country, our rented Jeep Cherokee full of photographers was desperately trying to reach the dirt assault strip where five CH47 helicopters and a C130 transport aircraft had just landed. The glassy-eyed stare of our driver, Tim Chapman of the *Miami Herald*, told me that he was focused on the C130 in the distance rather than the 4-foot-high embankment directly in front of us. Being on the passenger side, I prepared for the moment when I would launch head-first through the windshield. Resigned to the inevitable, I quietly told Tim to watch out for that bump up ahead. He locked the wheels, instantly turning the vehicle slightly sideways and stopping it inches from the embankment.

I had linked up with this group the day before in front of the Honduran airbase at Palmerola. Palmerola served as the headquarters for the American deployment and was the center of attention for what seemed like half the journalists in the world. Our intrepid little band, known among its members as the Rasta Rangers — only sick minds would name themselves after Jamaica's Rastafarians — consisted of Tim, who I knew from a previous trip to Central America, Gary Kiefer of *U.S. News and World Report*, Bob Peterson of *AFP*, Liliana of *New York Newsday* and myself. After politely receiving the sterile dog and pony show from the Public Affairs Office (PAO) at Palmerola, we decided to act on an inside tip that American and Honduran troops were going to conduct a joint airlanding on a dirt assault strip near the town of Jamastran — information the military wasn't giving out.

We gave ourselves less than a 50-percent chance of shooting anything as we drove toward Jamastran (photographers like to call themselves shooters), but when two Cobra helicopter gunships and their OH58 spotter escorts appeared on the horizon, we knew that we had struck gold. Just as the helicopters vanished over the hills, a lone C130 transport materialized out of nowhere and headed directly for us. We still couldn't see a landing strip so we frantically tried to follow the big bird as it made a leisurely turn and landed in a distant field. Everyone was yelling contradictory orders at Tim to "turn right, no left, hurry up, stop!" as we bounced over rocks, crops and tree stumps attempting to get to the landing site.

At the height of this chaos there appeared five CH47 helicopters flying in formation and heading toward the C130. Silence descended on the vehicle and we just looked at each other, awestruck, as if to say "Wow, just like in the movies." Someone started to hum a vaguely familiar tune and soon we were all da-da-ta-ta-TA-ta'ing Wagner's "Flight of the Valkyries," the music Colonel Kilgore used in *Apocalypse Now* to "scare the hell out of the slopes." Still singing, I ran out to open a gate that was blocking our way and as the Cherokee lurched forward the rear door flew open and camera gear was scattered all over the ground. The Keystone Cop scene of screaming people running around picking up camera gear while trying to make forward progress at the same time was witnessed by some Honduran farmers, who just stared in wide-eyed amazement as the crazy gringo periodistas passed by.

Forced to stop by the embankment that almost ended it for all of us, we ran like mad toward the huge dust cloud which marked the landing site of the C130 (the assault strip was not visible until we were right on top of it). We later agreed that had we known that it was over a half mile away we wouldn't have run so fast — it's difficult to take photographs when you're having a heart attack. Soon the Cobras and OH58s returned and swarmed all around us. I could almost hear the gunners pleading for permission to blow us away with their miniguns. We were lucky that they weren't armed with film seeking anti-press guided missiles. (Reliable sources indicate that such a weapon is under development even as I write.)

The helicopters deposited a Honduran unit on the landing strip, and by the time anyone realized that we weren't authorized to be there we had shot quite a few rolls of film, which we promptly hid in our jackets. At this early point in the deployment, the Honduran government was still claiming that it had no prior knowledge of the U.S. troops' deployment to their country. This claim, of course, was silly and was later dropped — I suppose that the U.S. parachute drop was a complete surprise to the Honduran officials that were on the drop zone to greet the troops, too. This nonsense, along with the public announcements of Central American presidents against U.S. intervention and their *private* pleas for U.S. assistance against Nicaraguan might and home-grown guerrillas, is a result of their desire not to be seen as "lackeys of the Americans" — you know, neo-colonialism and all that foolishness.

Finally, a Honduran officer came over and politely told us to leave. I flashed a Honduran press pass and tried to look official but he stuck to his orders and kicked us out anyway. Well, the Rasta Rangers weren't about to give up that easily. We just moved to a dry creek bed on the far side of the strip and hid under the trees to avoid detection by the still prowling helicopters. After about an hour, more C130s, this time bringing U.S. troops, landed. I ran out to the forward edge of the strip to shoot the landings while the others ambushed the soldiers of the 7th Light Infantry Division as they disembarked. The Palmerola PAO officers off-loaded with the soldiers thinking that they had pulled a fast one on the press by not advertising the landings. One can only guess how they felt when four shooters, frothing at the mouth and armed with Nikons, descended upon the helpless troops from out of the swirling dust.

Information moves quickly in this business and soon more press began to show up, but by that time the Hondurans had disappeared into the tree line and we were headed back to the Honduran capital. All in all, it wasn't a bad day's work for the Rasta Rangers. The newspaper people in our group had scored a major coup by being the only photographers able to shoot the Hondurans and by being the first to photograph the landings. Being first is of vital importance in a profession where film is developed in hotel rooms and instantly sent back for the next edition via portable transmitter, over the international telephone network. It was also a worthwhile day for me because I was able to observe firsthand a battle in the friendly war between the security-minded military and the information-hungry press. No matter how you feel about the way which these two professions handle their respective responsibilities, our nation is served well by each. Try living in freedom without either one.

It bolstered the confidence of Honduras to stand firm against Sandinista incursions into its territory, and it saved the contras from a humiliating defeat on the eve of a politically important conference, while avoiding direct U.S. involvement in hostilities. Who could ask for anything more?

Naturally, the geopolitical impact of the deployment was the primary concern of the strategists back in Washington, but there was a more personal, human dimension as well — the U.S. soldiers who had eagerly left the safety of the United States fully expecting to taste combat in a Central American jungle.

Soldiers of the 7th Infantry and the 82nd Airborne Divisions know that as part of the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force they can be called upon at any moment to die for their country in some godforsaken backwater. This role, far from causing dissention in the ranks, is a source of immense pride to these men.

Sitting in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, as I was, it was easy to see the political aspect of the U.S. operation, but from the point of view of a young soldier who is told to cancel all plans, grab his gear and be ready to go to Central America — *yesterday* — political nuances must have seemed insignificant compared to the prospect of dodging Sandinista bullets. And, like a football team that practices for years and never gets a chance to play a game, the opportunity to fight in real combat had men competing tooth and nail to participate. I spoke to three artillery forward observers who voluntarily came off leave to be part of the deployment, and a medic who had undergone nasal surgery shortly before the operation but gladly suffered the agony of sutures bursting during the high altitude flight to Honduras, to get his shot at a real war.

The commander of 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment told me that if anyone had wanted to stay behind they could have honorably done so, but no one did. There may be skeptics who will claim that the men held ranks only because of peer pressure, but they would claim the same of the men at Thermopylae or the Alamo. I would call it bravery.



Oh well . . . at least I can tell the girls in Fayetteville that *I* was in a fire fight.



**ABOVE: M102 105mm howitzer crew prepares to set up shop in Honduras.**

**BELOW: M102 being laid in. Note roll bar across the breech and sight area of the howitzer, installed by the 82nd for protection in the event cross winds catch the chute and roll the gun over after a paradrop.**



After they arrived in Honduras, U.S. forces were quickly deployed to scattered locations throughout the country, but were never placed closer than approximately 30 kilometers from the Nicaraguan border and further yet from the scene of the actual fighting in the Bocay River area. It was quickly apparent to the troops that they wouldn't see combat on this EDRE (Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise), anemically named "Golden Pheasant" by some character back at headquarters. Joint U.S./Honduran training which was hastily organized, largely for propaganda purposes, was clearly an inadequate substitute for the action they had expected. Their disappointment was genuine but the troops were too professional to let their feelings get in the way of their performance.

I was granted permission to spend two days and nights in the field with units of the 82nd and was able to observe the exercise first hand. The 1st Battalion, 504th PIR typified the excellence displayed by all the units deployed. Its rifle companies were dug into the military crests of hills surrounding a cow pasture which served as a helicopter landing zone (LZ) and an artillery battery position for the unit's 105mm howitzers. It was obvious that these men had packed for war, not comfort. The battalion commander's TOC (Tactical Operations Center) was nothing more than a hole in the ground stuffed with maps, gear and exhausted staffers, and was covered with ponchos someone had hopefully strung up in an effort to keep dry in the intermittent rain. Nowhere in evidence were the large "ghetto blasters" blaring rock or disco music you see so many other armies take with them to the field, and there wasn't a tent in sight. Everyone, including the battalion commander, slept under poncho hooches and used only thin nylon poncho liners for warmth during the surprisingly cool Honduran nights. (Sleeping bags take up too much room in a rucksack to be practical).

Although the deployment was now only a training exercise, tactical discipline was seriously maintained. I know because I

almost fell into the well-camouflaged and dead-silent TOC during the first night's stand-to. (Stand-to is conducted during the hours bracketing sunset and sunrise. During this period strict silence is maintained and all positions are fully manned in expectation of an imminent attack.)

Whenever I talked to the troops I was asked the same question: "What do the folks back home think of us being here?" These men are proud of their military service and work their butts off to defend their country's security, so they can be sensitive, even to the whinings of naive groups who have never faced more hardship than having their favorite television show

**Motorcycles are integral equipment to 82nd scout platoons, providing a quick and maneuverable way to sneak and peek.**

cancelled. I was happy to report that the protests were so few that a liberal newspaper columnist felt compelled to write an essay deploring the lack of public reaction. Ah, for the days of riots and campus occupations — where does the time go? I was also able to tell them that about 300 Hondurans had gathered in front of Palmerola airbase, a Honduran compound that acted as the headquarters for the U.S. deployment, and held a pro-U.S. rally while carrying signs that read, "Thank you for your help" and "We don't want to be communists." "It's about time," was the largely unspoken response from the troops.

The U.S. armed forces devote a great deal of effort in providing for their troops' morale and this operation was no exception. Where other armies at best merely instruct their troops to boil water before drinking — dysentery has always



been a problem for the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, for instance — the Americans on this exercise used valuable CH-47 helicopter time to carry bladders of decontaminated water to the men in the field. Foot powder, cigarettes and even chewing tobacco were regularly brought out to the field to keep the men happy. One morning I was amazed to see soldiers of 1/504 getting day-old Fayetteville newspapers and mail from home in their defensive positions. Mail? They'd only been in Honduras for a couple of days! One young sergeant received a package from his wife, cookies I think, wrapped in bright pink paper and inscribed with "hurry home honey" and "I miss you" written in big blue magic marker letters. Though the sentiments and cookies were heartfully appreciated by the sergeant, his comrades' good-natured abuse about the box forced him to retire to more private surroundings to savor his prize.



**M72-series Light Antitank Weapon. Handy for mashing light armor, busting bunkers and, in this case, a practice assault on a tree which (oops!) started a brush fire. Well, brush-fire wars are why we're here, right?**





**ABOVE:** Laying in an 81mm mortar. Poor man's artillery? Maybe, but what else can you carry on your back that will reach out and touch someone at 4,500 meters?

**BELOW:** While leftist terrorists set fire to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa in response to the 82nd dropping in for a visit, local Hondurans at Palmerola indicated they were far more welcome than the Sandinistas!



This type of support undoubtedly boosts our soldiers' morale, but it can also contain hidden dangers. Any old-timer can tell you that the way you train is the way you'll fight. If men become accustomed to luxuries in training they come to expect them in all situations, eventually considering them essential to their survival. Their morale can only be affected adversely when the dictates of war make it impossible for them to receive regular goodies on the battlefield. Another danger is that when a logistical system routinely allows a high priority to non-lethal supplies, it can find it difficult to quickly reorient to the bullet side of the beans-and-bullets equation when the balloon *really* goes up. Even if assets are available, things like turkey dinners on Thanksgiving and hometown newspapers may only make troops more homesick and dissipate needed combat focus.

But in the case at hand, being far too professional to just sit around and vegetate, units of the 2/504 were issued the live ammunition originally intended for use against the Sandinistas to conduct live-fire exercises. Artillery batteries conducted day and night live fires and two-gun raids, where two 105mm howitzers were slung from helicopters and deposited, along with their crews, deep behind enemy lines. The guns rapidly engaged targets like command and control centers and support facilities, and then were extracted by the same air assets before the bad guys can pinpoint their location.

The unit I accompanied, C Company, 3/505 (a unit attached to the 2/504 in order to round out the task force) conducted day and night live-fire ambushes. The exercise scenario consisted of a platoon-size ambush conducted against enemy troops walking

down a road. The enemy was simulated by a pallet of silhouettes towed through the kill zone by a HMMWV (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle).

Being an American, I'm probably a biased observer, but I was impressed by the way these units performed on this exercise. After working with fighters as disorganized as the Afghan mujahideen and the Nicaraguan contras, it was refreshing to see these well-equipped and well-trained men quietly move through the bush and react to every tactical situation without an order being spoken.



**ABOVE:** Retiring semi-hero, the M60. When a fire mission requires the 7.62x51mm NATO round, the M60 is the best machine gun we have in that caliber. Unfortunately, it's the *only* machine gun we have in that caliber.

**BELOW:** Trooper with new M249 SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon), our version of the Belgian FN Minimi. With a full box of 200 belted rounds, the M249 weighs less than an empty M60. A belt cannister attaches firmly to the weapon, helpful for assault fire, and standard M16 magazines can also be used.



The platoon quickly formed a linear ambush along a dirt road. Along with its normal complement of M16A2 rifles, the platoon carried two M18 command detonated anti-personnel mines, a 7.62mm M60 machine gun, six 5.56mm M249 Squad Automatic Weapons (SAWs), and two Light Antitank Weapons (LAWs). Faced with this arsenal, the enemy silhouettes had little chance to survive their passage. Even though the heavier weapons were told not to directly engage the silhouettes (the other platoons needed something to shoot at, too), enough lead flew through the kill zone to completely pepper the targets with what would have been lethal wounds.

Since there weren't any suitable LAW targets in the kill zone, the gunners bet each other that they could hit a tree about 100 meters on the far side of the ambush site. Neither one of them hit the tree but they quickly discovered what a LAW could do to the Honduran countryside during the dry season. The resulting fire engulfed the hillside and demanded the attention of the entire platoon, as well as at least one journalist, until well after dark. We were lucky that we were able to put it out. Imagine the headlines if it got out of control: "U.S. forces set fire to Honduras, CIA plot suspected, Daniel Ortega demands that all countries in Central America declare war on the arsonists." On second thought, maybe we should have let it keep burning.

The night ambush presented its own set of difficulties. On the first daylight ambush the HMMWV attempted to pull the pallet with a strand of barbed wire. After three false starts caused by breaking wire, a short nylon rope was used. Its short length forced the HMMWV to drive through the kill zone as it towed the targets.

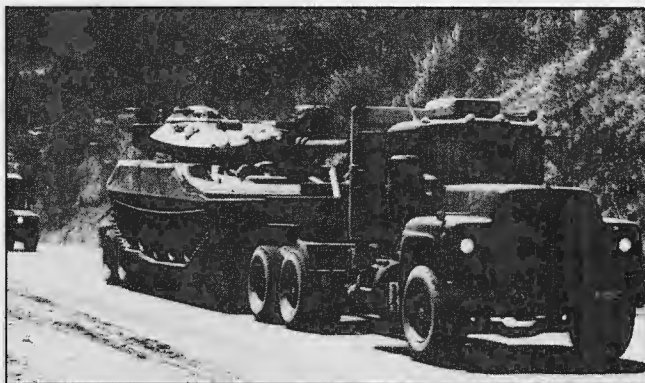
This was a rather dangerous situation because, even with chemlights placed on the targets and the HMMWV, target identification at night was difficult.

On the last ambush of the night, the platoon leader initiated with the M18 claymore mines before the HMMWV was out of the kill zone. When the mines detonated all hell broke loose along the firing line. The noise of M16s, M60s and SAWS all



ABOVE: Loading a HMMWV and trailer into a C130. A C130 can carry three HMMWVs.

BELOW: M551 Sheridan on truck transport. While dropped from inventory in most units, the Sheridan has been retained by Rapid Deployment Forces because of its air portability.



## INTO HONDURAS

Most field soldiers don't receive the recognition they deserve. During Golden Pheasant, line infantry and combat support units deployed to Honduras — ready to fight — and we think it's important to let you know who they were.

### 7th Infantry Division (Light), Fort Ord, California

- 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry
- 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry
- B Battery, 6th Battalion, 8th Field Artillery
- Elements of 2nd Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery
- Elements of 7th Military Police Company

### 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina

- 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
- 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
- C Company, 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment
- A Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery
- B Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery
- A Company, 307th Engineer Battalion
- B Company, 82nd Signal Battalion
- A Company, 313th Military Intelligence Battalion
- Elements of 82nd Military Police Company
- FAST (Forward Area Support Team) support from A Company, 407th Supply & Transport Battalion; B Company, 307th Medical Battalion; B Company, 782nd Maintenance Battalion
- 1st Battalion, 17th Cavalry (-), 82nd Aviation Brigade

firing at once masked the platoon leader's desperate cries of "cease fire." In his panic to stop the stream of bullets that seemed to be directed right at the HMMWV — it was, after all, the biggest target in the kill zone — he grabbed hold of my camera arm and shouted "cease-fire" over and over again. Though my camera flash could do little damage to anyone, I completely understood his reaction.

*Continued on page 79*



Honduran weapons platoon and their Brandt (French) MO-120-LT 120mm mortars (left), and Brandt 81mm light mortars.



Helmets, skeletal remains — the flotsam and jetsam of war become the artifacts of history.

# TRACKING THE TIGER'S TREASURE

**Philippine Booty Lures  
High Rollers, Low Rollers  
and a General**

Text & Photos by Nicholas C. Auclair

I know *It* is there. Major General John K. Singlaub (U.S. Army, Ret.), of anti-communist fame, knows *It* is there. For 20 years former President Marcos and his family held a virtual monopoly on looking for *It*. Lord knows there are plenty of natives digging and probing the mountains right now looking for *It*.

The big *It* the General and I and a cast of thousands seek is the lost treasure of the infamous "Tiger of Malay." This treasure, legend has it, is a king's ransom in gold, silver and precious gems. It is reportedly buried in underground vaults in 189 sites throughout the Philippines; according to one senior treasure hunter, eight of these are major caches.

The bulk of this looted treasure probably

## ARTICULATE AMATEUR

Nicholas C. Auclair has spent much of his free time during the last six years in the Far East in pursuit of Yamashita's treasure. His interest piqued by stories of Negritos finding oil drums full of gold and silver coins, he became hooked on the quest after several trips into the jungle with Negritos searching for war souvenirs. Toward this end, Auclair did extensive research with area historians and interviewed locals who were there during the Japanese occupation. In the process he earned a Master's degree in Philippine-Asian studies from the University of the Philippines.

Since the killing of three Americans by the communist New People's Army last October, however, Nick told us that "A 6-foot-tall white Americano in the mountains is just too easy of a target," but that hasn't dampened his enthusiasm. He's still looking, while also working on a book about the insurgent war and treasure hunting in the Philippines.



started arriving in the Philippines sometime in mid-1944, along with the Imperial Japanese forces of General Tomoyuki Yamashita, better known as the "Tiger of Malay." The Tiger and his men had concluded a very successful military campaign which included the rape-pillage-and-plunder of French Indochina, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, the occidental's pearl of the Orient. Singapore, bastion of British power, fell to 10,000 bicycle-mounted warriors of the Rising Sun . . . but that's another story. James Leasor tells it better than I could in his book *Singapore: The Battle That Changed The World*.

In any case, the old saying goes: "To the victor goes the spoils," and Yamashita's victorious men arrived in the Philippines with literally billions worth of looted gold and gems from the temples, palaces and capital cities of Southeast Asia. The treasure was to be stored in the Philippines and used to help finance Japan's dream of an Asian empire known as the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." The engineering company that Yamashita assigned to the task of storing the treasure laboriously built underground chambers, hidden so well that even after 40 years their locations are undiscovered. None of the members of the engineering company are known to have survived the war, and even the "Tiger" himself was captured and executed by the

**RIGHT:** Hunters for a living, Negritos are expert with a bow and arrow, pellet rifle, or World War II Japanese Arisaka.

**BELOW:** Mountains, valleys and streams of the rugged Zambales range northwest of Manila, where General Yamashita's 14th Army prepared elaborate underground defenses and prepared to fight to the last man. It is an eight-hour hike from the nearest road to author's search area. During the dry season the hills are covered only with short elephant grass, but the heavily jungled valleys hide most of Yamashita's caves and bunkers.







## THE TIGER AND THE DONKEY

It was in the very early days of the war, and the "Tiger of Malay" was running across the Asian subcontinent like Grant through Georgia. His fellow generals were swallowing the Chinese mainland like a snake eats a bird. The best the Allies could do was seek a fallback sanctuary which would give them time to regroup and rearm for their eventual attack on what they hoped would prove to be an over-extended Japanese war machine. In the meantime, ways were sought to slow the momentum of the Japanese advance without committing hard-pressed Allied troops.

The OSS (Office of Strategic Services, precursor of the CIA), proposed that crucial high-ranking Japanese officers could be efficiently eliminated if their Chinese female attendants would place a minute speck of botulin toxin, contained in a pin-head-sized gelatin wafer, in the officers' food. This seemed like a most workable

plan, especially since the Chinese girls would find it difficult to conceal other weapons because of the dress requirements of their profession, and botulism poisoning was common enough in Asia that perhaps there would be no great suspicion. Since at that point the OSS had few operatives in the theater, the goods were delivered by them to the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), who had primary responsibility for the area.

It seemed to ONI personnel that such a tiny speck of poison could hardly dispatch a whole general, and would probably only sicken a colonel (although it might have telling effect on an NCO or private). It was decided, therefore, to properly test the product before the risk was taken to smuggle it into the general staff's rice pudding. Unfortunately, ONI did the test run on a local burro. As a result this salubrious plan, which could have changed the course of the war in Asia, was never carried out. A burro, it happens, has a unique and total immunity to the deadly effects of botulism.

— Don McLean

Allied forces. Thus the man who was the brain behind Japan's victorious sweep and vengeful pillaging of Southeast Asia carried to his grave the answers to a perplexing and intriguing mystery.

Since the war many have, of course, tried to locate the treasure troves. Most were local amateurs. Only a very few professional, adequately funded operations have made attempts. For the last 20 years, President Marcos and his family had a virtual monopoly on treasure hunting, whether it be for 16th century Spanish treasure galleons, or World War II loot. Treasure uncovered during Marcos' reign reportedly was either found through Marcos-controlled enterprises or confiscated from successful but non-authorized treasure hunters.

Recent newspaper accounts report that several prominent lawyers have been secretly searching for the treasure since the early 1960s, under the code name "The Lynx." Researching from old maps and eyewitness accounts, they are now contemplating negotiations with the new government to strike a deal, offering the government a percentage of all findings in exchange for clear title to their own share. They reportedly have not yet contacted the government, recalling all too vividly the actions of Marcos' agents who were rumored to have made ruthless investigations of any "private" treasure hunting expeditions. One particular story which came to light after being repressed for years by Marcos-controlled media centered around what was known in the press as "The Tale of the Golden Buddha, a Philippine-style Maltese Falcon."

In early 1971, a local treasure hunter by the name of Rogelio Roxas claimed to have been robbed by the Marcos family of a valuable object which he had found, and which he believed to be part of Yamashita's treasure. The object was a 28-inch gold statue of Buddha with a removable, hollow head, stuffed with precious gems. A few days after he hauled his find home, agents bearing a search warrant signed by Marcos' uncle, Judge Pio Marcos, raided his house and confiscated the statue on the grounds that it was considered a national treasure, not a personal one. After he went to court to plead his case it was announced by the government that the statue was not gold, but merely brass, and Roxas was given a token compensation. Contradicting the government's "merely a worthless brass statue" story was another press report which indicated that the day before Roxas was to appear in court, Marcos' mother, Josefa Edralin Marcos, had vigorously attempted, in vain, to purchase the statue. Roxas argued his case against Marcos again last year, before a presidential fact-finding commission, formed by the new government to investigate Marcos corruption charges. His attorney argued that among the millions of dollars worth of jewels which the Marcos' took with them to their exile home in Hawaii were, in fact, some of jewels from the Buddha that Roxas found.

With the end of the Marcos era came a

flood of foreign requests for treasure exploration rights. It is reported that, unofficially, the new government is only too happy to accommodate any mutually lucrative offers. The Filipino people have long considered the treasure to be a national legacy which could be used to bail the country out of its pitiful economic condition. The treasure has even taken on a mystic quality. Various radical religious groups in the Philippines believe that the treasure was hidden there with divine purpose to enable the Philippines to finance a spiritual world movement.

Members of the new government under Aquino are realists, and know that without the sophisticated equipment and know-how of foreign firms, the treasure may elude everyone for a long time. As a result, barely five months after the revolution in July 1986, local newspapers reported that Nippon Star, a foreign company, had started digging for treasure in the village of Lalakay, Los Banos, on the island of Luzon. Related to this, in February 1987, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran an expose on Gen. Singlaub's activities in the Philippines. Many believed he was there to organize anti-communist elements, acting as a liaison to Washington for the CIA. Singlaub firmly denied these allegations. He insisted instead that he was searching, with governmental approval, for Yamashita's treasure — a fortune which could finance his world anti-communist activities as well as it could have funded Japan's dream of "A Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." Local papers investigated, and reportedly came up with direct links between Singlaub and the multi-billion peso operation in Lalakay, involving the Nippon Star company.

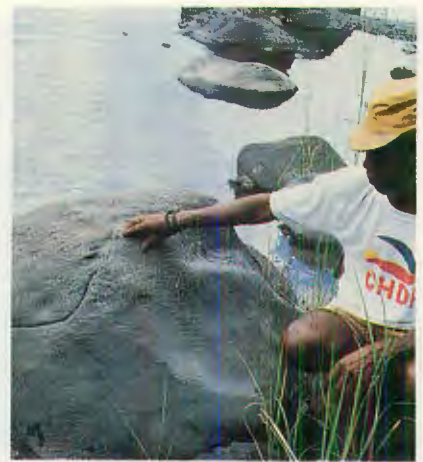
Aside from the Nippon Star company, various other nationalities are represented in the search. There are German, French and English teams climbing, diving and digging. Of all the groups now in the country, the Japanese, at least as far as rumor and press reporting are concerned, seem to be having the most success. Stories of *matandang hapon mga lalaki* (old Japanese men) journeying into the mountains, some being carried by porters, lends some substance to the rumors that members of Yamashita's elite engineering company *did* in fact survive the war and have come back to relocate their vaults.

Japanese command post, laboriously hewn from solid granite.



One particular story involves four Japanese nationals who rented a non-productive 11-hectare farm in Teresa, Rizal Province, under the pretext of starting an herb growing business. One of the individuals was very old and had to be aided when he walked. They built several structures and unbeknownst to their neighbors began digging tunnels *inside* these shelters.

**RIGHT:** Entrance to an underwater cave that was recently explored by two Japanese nationals in scuba equipment. Negritos reported they brought a cloth map, which matched a diagram that had been carved into a rock near the entrance. The search goes on!



## THE LITTLE BLACK MEN

More than 400 years ago, in 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan claimed the Philippine archipelago for Spain, the Spaniards named the small, tough hill people *Negritos* or "little black men." Thought to be the first inhabitants of the Philippine Islands, the Negritos probably came there some 30,000 years ago from Borneo and Sumatra, across then-existing land bridges. Similar and related peoples inhabit other parts of Malaysia and southeastern Asia. Subsequently, people of Malay stock came from the south in successive waves to populate the islands, first by land bridges, later in boats called *barangays*.

The Malays settled in scattered communities, mostly in the valleys, but the Negritos preferred to live in small, nomadic tribes — mostly in the mountains — where they hunted and harvested for a living. During the Chinese influx of the 9th century, the Arabian arrival of the 14th century, the Spanish invasion of the 15th century, the American occupation after the Spanish-American war, the Japanese invasion and occupation during World War II, and subsequent post-war Philippine regimes, the reclusive Negritos have man-

Author with guides in a Negrito village. They seldom venture from these villages and their jungle homeland, except to sell war souvenirs or the natural products which they harvest, such as rattan and fruits.

aged to retain their own identity and semi-nomadic lifestyle. The mountainous jungle is their home, and the Japanese invaders avoided them when possible, because even though equipped only with stone-age weapons, the tough little Negritos were capable and brave fighters who resented their treatment at the hands of the Japanese.

Like hill people everywhere, the Negritos prefer to be left alone, but if properly treated they are friendly and helpful. They have, for instance, generously shared their knowledge of jungle survival, acting as cadre for U.S. military jungle survival schools in the Philippines. And if, as the author, you need a guide through the Philippine bush, there are none better. Still preferring their nomadic lifestyle in the 20th century (when they can survive at it), Negritos today live mostly in small, semi-permanent camps, use what modern weapons they find as castoffs from WWII, and still hunt, harvest, and scrounge war souvenirs in the Philippine mountains.

— Don McLean



**LEFT:** These are *not* trail markers, but warning signs for punji traps the Negritos have set for wild pigs. Other traps used for harvesting wild game are explosive devices rigged from World War II Japanese ordnance, or home-made pipe bombs. Note Japanese NCO saber blades used as markers.

## GENERAL TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA

Yamashita was nicknamed "The Tiger of Malay," but this comparison is entirely unfair to tigers, who only savage what they will eat. He was the military genius responsible for planning and executing the 25th Japanese Army's dramatic sweep down the 600-mile Malay peninsula to sack Singapore during the dark, early days of World War II. Yamashita and his ruthless legions elevated brutality, pillage and rape to an art form. That which could not be killed, commandeered or stolen, was destroyed.

In Malaya's southernmost state of Johore, after the battle at the Muar River, Yamashita's commanders felt they had lost face because 900 Australian defenders managed to escape into the jungle — so they systematically decapitated 200 wounded Australian and Indian troops left behind in the retreat. Having conquered Malaya and overrun Singapore, Yamashita's troops broke into the military hospital at Alexandria, bayoneting patients and staff alike, killing more than 300 unarmed and helpless people. Yamashita's 70-day conquest of the Malay peninsula cost only 9,824 Japanese casualties, while inflicting 138,708 casualties on the British.

Yamashita was given command of the newly-formed Japanese 14th Army in the defense of the Philippines, arriving with his staff in Manila on 9 October 1944. He did not have long to wait for a fight, as American troops landed on Leyte in early November. The Japanese command had Yamashita send three divisions plus several brigades, regiments and battalions from his 14th Army at Manila to assist the 16th Japanese Army defending Leyte. By the end of December, U.S. troops were in the mopping-up stages on Leyte, and in early January 1945, General Yamashita abandoned the Japanese forces on Leyte to concentrate on his defense of the island of Luzon.

Yamashita's plan was to retreat to the Zambales mountains with his remaining 262,000 troops and dig in, from where he could deny the advancing Americans access to nearby Clark Field. He did not want to stage a protracted defense of Manila; he instructed naval forces there to fight a retrograde action, and when the battle turned against them to join his forces in the Zambales mountains. The Japanese naval commander, however, decided to defend Manila to the bitter end, to save the naval facilities there. By early March, American troops had taken Manila in a grueling house-to-house, hand-to-hand battle.

It took until July 1945 for the Americans to root Yamashita's troops out of their mountain strongholds, again fighting the suicidal Japanese bunker-to-bunker, hand-to-hand. Indeed, at the time of Japanese capitulation, the thoroughly entrenched and adequately supplied troops under Yamashita still engaged two divisions of American troops, plus a division of Philippine guerrillas. To accomplish this, Yamashita had sacrificed some 205,535 men from his original garrison of 275,685. The attacking American 6th and 8th armies, on the other hand, suffered 37,870 casualties, of whom 8,310 died.

After the Japanese surrender, as the Allies promised, Japanese war criminals were tried for their varied and numerous atrocities. Although unquestionably one of Japan's most capable generals, Yamashita was convicted and sentenced to death for his cruelty and savagery toward the helpless and innocent. Upon his sentencing, he wrote:

*The world I knew is now a shameful place  
There will never be a better time  
For me to die.*

The military tribunal which tried him for his crimes agreed that this was a good time for him to die. The victims of his brutality, however, might have opted for a time a few years earlier.

— Don McLean

A man who entered one of the shelters by accident reported he saw a large, deep tunnel and cloth maps hanging on the wall, with diagrams and Japanese writing. The group worked for about six months, then packed up their belongings and left. No work per se had been done on the "herb fields." One local noted that on the day of their departure, a mechanical loader was employed to lift two big wooden crates into a truck. Inside one of the tunnels, carved into the earth, was the outline of a large 4x4-foot urn. The owner of the farm later learned from the driver of the rented truck that he had dropped the group and their crates at a Chinese brokerage company in Manila. After finishing in Teresa the group reportedly rented a farm in Morong, Rizal, under the pretext of starting a chicken farm. They followed the same modus operandi, but it is not known if they transported any-

**Steel strongbox was discovered full of potentially priceless documents, which were burned as torches by the Negritos exploring the underground bunker.**



thing away from the site.

Political intrigue and big-money ventures may be in the limelight, but it's the actual down-in-the-dirt walking, digging and hiking that has for me, made searching for the treasure an adventure in itself. The Philippine jungle is no place for amateurs or novice survivalists.

Between poisonous snakes, communist New People's Army guerrillas and bandits, not to mention the difficulty of locating the caves and carrying equipment into the rugged outback, my Negrito guides are invaluable. The Negritos are a short, pygmy-like people with dark skin and curly hair. Most anthropologists believe them to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the Philippine Islands. Today, many continue to live as they have done for thousands of years, remotely, in semi-nomadic family groups. They travel from the mountains to the populated areas to sell jungle products like rattan, fruits and war souvenirs that they find. Armed with weapons ranging from the bow and arrow, WWII rifles to modern firearms, the Negritos are adept guides with an amazing knowledge of the terrain and water supplies. Americans during the war used them as guides. Japanese soldiers were terrified of the tiny Negritos, who were known to creep into their camps in the dead of night and slit the throat of a single sleeping soldier.

One incident from my early treasure-hunting days, which underscores the value of a good guide, involved a trail marker that our group came across on an expedition. By

*Continued on page 73*

**RIGHT:** Japanese NCO's saber. Some such blades were family heirlooms, fitted with regulation handles and scabbards and carried to war by their owners. Such valuable blades will have identifying marks on the tang beneath a sharkskin handle.

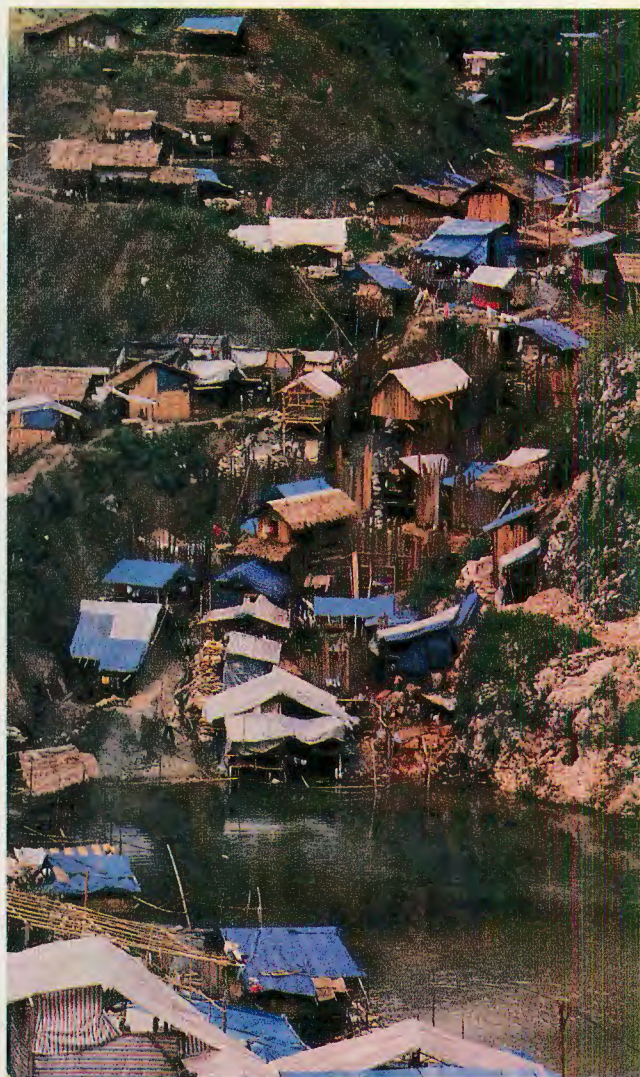
**BELOW:** Negrito families, as they live their nomadic life in the jungle. It may seem like dangerous jungle country to an outsider, but this is their home, and they have an amazing knowledge of terrain, food, and water supplies.



# GOLD DIGGERS OF FORTUNE

## Boomtowners Wield Picks and Shovels, Not Hammer and Sickle

Text & Photos by Gene Scroft



### QUICK AND DIRTY GUIDE TO A QUICK AND DIRTY BUSINESS

Techniques currently used in the Philippines for mining and extracting gold vary from aboriginal to state-of-the-art, apparently predicated (as is usually the case in the gold business) upon the financial resources of the particular miner. Except for a very few minerals (rare enough to be museum specimens when identified), and when occasionally found in natural solutions (gold can be dissolved by many natural lixivants, from humic acid in rotting vegetation to various chloride salts at a low pH), gold is always found in an elemental (metallic) state — usually alloyed with silver and copper in varying proportions. It occurs in big pieces and little pieces, from several pounds to sub-micron, possibly even atomic, size.

Big pieces are easy. The host rock breaks down through natural erosion, or some stalwart miner breaks it apart with a variable mixture of tools, machinery, and sweat. Pieces of gold are then re-

moved from the milled ore (or natural gravels and soils, where it is called *placer* gold) using gravimetric methods, or mercury amalgamation, or direct smelting, or combinations of the above. Except for the larger capacity, more efficient tools and machinery available today, not much has changed in that part of the gold business during the course of recorded history.

Itty-bitty pieces, however, have not received much attention until recent times — probably because nobody knew they were there. And that's a pity, because most of the gold there exists in itty-bitty pieces, too small and too far between to collect or concentrate by economical gravimetric methods. The U.S. government estimated that at \$35 an ounce, the leanest material on earth has over a billion dollars worth of gold per cubic mile — but just try and get it out at a profit!

In King Solomon's day, if the host rock had *enough* gold, itty-bitty pieces or not, they would direct-smelt the rock, and the heavy metal would melt and collect together like butter in a churn. Other ancient methods were to add a lot

of lead or lead-bearing ore, and smelt the whole thing. The batch contained the ingredients for glass, and the base metals (zinc, iron, other garbage) would dissolve in the glass, leaving a lead-gold alloy. This lead-gold alloy was then heated until the lead boiled off, leaving the gold behind. This same technique is used today in the fire assay, using a carefully measured sample of the ore, and chemically-pure lead and glass components.

Aqua regia, a mixture of hydrochloric and nitric acids, was used in the days of the ancients to dissolve the gold from the rock, but you had to have pretty rich rock to pay for this expensive process. It is still used today for refining precious metals. Gold is relatively resistant to chemical attack, which is why it stays so pretty. Which is why men have let it, or the quest for it, warp their heads since time immemorial.

In the late 1880s a couple of Scotchmen named MacArthur and Forrest patented a process using potassium cyanide to dissolve the itty-bitty pieces of gold from the rock, the gold subsequently being dropped from the cyanide

**T**HE body just lay there at the edge of the dirt street. Unknown assailants had shot him in the head the night before. Someone had piously placed candles next to the corpse but no one in the crowd of onlookers seemed more than curious. This is, after all, a gold town and murders aren't all that uncommon.

Diwalwal (pronounced Dē-wal-wal) is a Philippine boom town located on the island of Mindanao (see map on page 54). Since gold was rediscovered here in 1983, hordes of fortune hunters have carved a town of 80,000 into the mountainside. There are more than 200 mines in the area, five of which produce high-grade ore. The town itself is a maze of bars, brothels and ore dressing mills which crowd the narrow streets and hide the sun from the miners scurrying to and from the mines. Watery mill tailings transform the streets, in many places barely three feet across, into muddy rivers alive with foot traffic.

As in the historic mining towns of the American west, many come here to seek their fortunes without picks and shovels. Merchants of varying degrees of honesty compete for the miners' gold with gambling halls that play a game of heads or tails called *hantak*. Ubiquitous prostitutes ply their

**LEFT: Squatter's shantytown clings to the mountainside over an abandoned open pit mine near the Hijo River. This placer operation was shut down by North Davao Mining Company, but was quickly reopened by squatters when the price of gold rose. A *pax Romana* between squatters and the company allows them, for now, to operate on a shares basis.**



**LEFT: Diwalwal version of an ore bucket and hoist. Amid a maze of wires, pipes and hoses, miners rig ore wrapped in cloth bags for hoisting to the surface.**

trade from "discos" and offer a much sought diversion for the miners — as well as another outlet for their hard-won money. One enterprising businessman offers a less traditional form of entertainment: he installed a video game powered by a generator. Judging by the size of the crowd, business was good.

In the mines, men work around the clock in 12-hour shifts. Most work is done by hand. Many shafts and tunnels are too close together to allow blasting or even the use of jackhammers, which might cause cave-ins. The work is hard, primitive and dangerous, but with millions of pesos (20 pesos to the dollar) coming from these workings, few complain.

Diwalwal has never been bothered by the extortions of the communist New People's Army (NPA) which are endemic to other Philippine mining towns. It is assumed here that this is because some of the mines are *owned* by the NPA. As long as they are not harassed, the miners mind their own business.

Gold miners are an independent lot and chafe under any type of control. According to the area army commander, Colonel Ram-berto Savedra, Diwalwal resisted attempts by the army to establish checkpoints around the town. The military wanted to ensure that

**LEFT: If you think these kids don't earn their pay, consider that this type of quartzose ore usually weighs well over 150 pounds per cubic foot.**

solution by the addition of zinc. This basic process is still widely used today, because cyanide is a whole lot cheaper than anything else ever found that will dissolve gold (*sodium cyanide* is almost universally used today because it is even cheaper to produce — the raw materials for its manufacture are air and lye). Although there are many different methods now in use to remove the gold from the cyanide solution (commonest is to adsorb the gold to charcoal which is smelted or stripped, collecting it with ion-exchange resins, reducing it to metal by the addition of hydrogen sulfide, or by direct electro-winning), the basic chemistry of gold cyanidation has been unchanged for a hundred years.

New and appropriate applications of existing technology, however, have dramatically changed the face of gold production. Considering the fact that most of the gold exists in very small pieces, and most of it occurs in a pretty lean proportion to its host rock, two things had to happen to give the gold business new life.

First, the value of gold in relation to world currencies had to rise dramatical-

ly, and cheap and efficient methods had to be developed to go after the lean pickings on a profitable basis. The world market for gold had been depressed artificially by the U.S. government's pegging the price at 35-metal-backed-dollars per ounce. When we introduced printing-press money with no backing, the dollar no longer was worth anything but what somebody would give for it; it was worth only its (waning) reputation. When a foreign government (as did France) would show up with 35 of our printing press dollars and demand an ounce of gold, we'd have to give it to them. Ooops, guess we'd better let the price of gold float to its actual value in relation to the dollar! And they did. And it did, shooting up to over \$800 per ounce. And U.S. citizens could legally own-buy-sell-produce gold in a free market once again. And now there was room for a margin of profit in the gold business. And the lean pickings could now be profitable, with a cheap and efficient process.

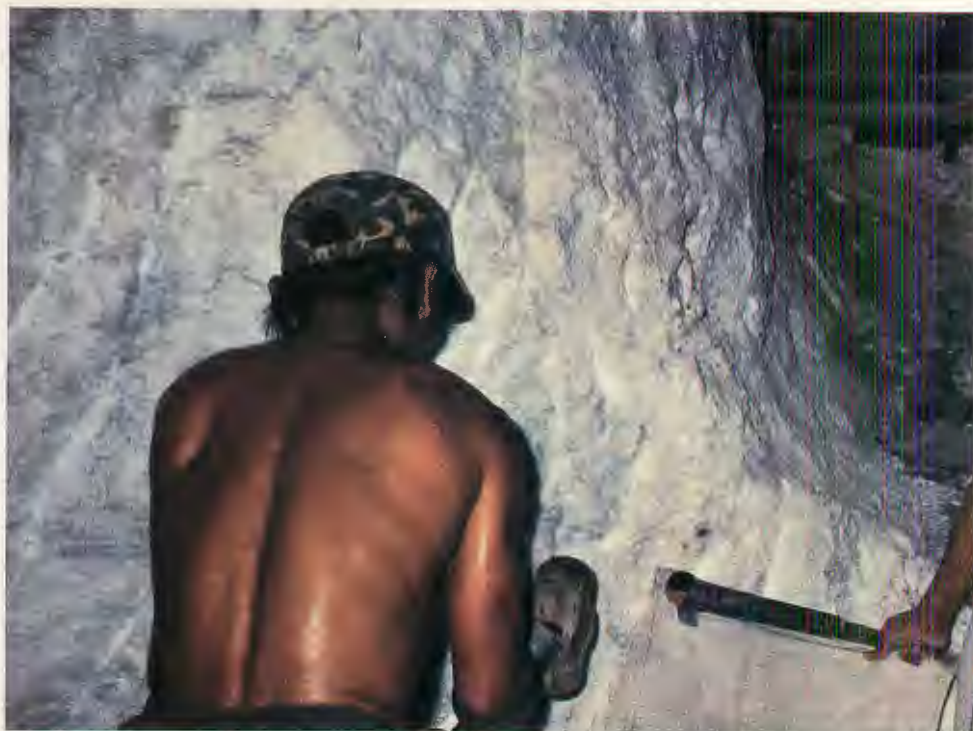
Shortly after the turn of the century, techniques were developed for fine-milling the ore to release the gold, and

separating or concentrating the gold by using an oil foam to float away the gold and gold-bearing pyrites, more efficient than the gravimetric methods in use for centuries. The greatest fool, of course, was the fellow who named pyrites "fool's gold" since that is often where the gold *is*, locked in the pyrite crystal as a discrete inclusion of metallic gold. These and other concentration techniques made the pursuit of finer — and leaner — gold a cost-effective proposition. Still you can only spend \$10 dressing ore which has \$11 worth of gold in it, or you'll go broke fast, unless you just have in mind producing *some* gold to show potential buyers of your mining stock. So if it costs too much to mill and concentrate the gold from a particular ore to enable the extraction process to be cost-effective, you still don't net a profit. There needed to be a cheaper way of handling the ore, without milling, concentrating it, and handling it more than once. Enter the cyanide heap-leach.

Initially developed in the USSR and perfected in South Africa and the United States, a heap-leach is simply a waterproof sheet ("pad liner") with a pile of



**ABOVE:** Shot in the head by an unknown assailant, this miner lying in the muddy streets of Diwalwal won't see his next payday. Was he shot for his gold? for claim jumping? for refusing to pay NPA extortion? out of jealousy or for revenge? No one will know, and the quest for gold continues.



**ABOVE:** Buttons of gold from a small mine. As in the Old West, local merchants and traders are happy to accept your gold as currency in Diwalwal.



**Local diversions for those miners with a gambling spirit.**



**Local diversions for those miners who really like to gamble.**

crushed gold-bearing rock on it (the "heap"), upon which you continually spray a weak solution (a few pounds per ton of water) of cyanide salts. The cyanide solution percolates through the heap, slowly dissolving the gold and carrying it to a collection point, usually a pond from where it is run through charcoal, which adsorbs the cyanide-gold complex. The Soviets are now using ion-exchange resins instead of charcoal, as the new resins — although more costly than charcoal — are more cost effective in the long run. The charcoal, or resin, is stripped by various methods and the gold collected for smelt by electro-winning, zinc drop, or whatever. The cyanide solution is adjusted for pH (alkalinity); if the solution is not kept strongly caustic the cyanide goes off as a gas, which is hard on those who live and breathe, and is also expensive to replace. Then the proportion of cyanide to water is adjusted, and the solution is sprayed on the heap again.

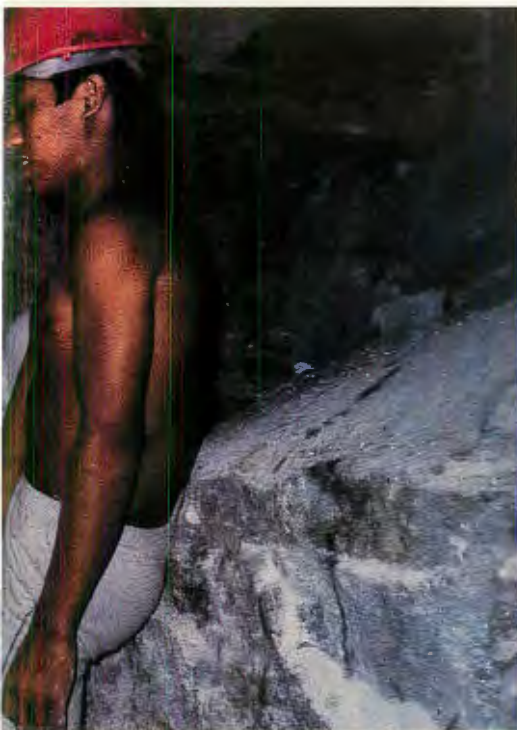
Some ores will not heap-leach profitably due to a preponderance of cyanide-eating base minerals (cyanicides), an actively acid nature, or the fact they are

not permeable. And it follows that ores vary widely in how long they must stay on a heap before all the gold is dissolved, as this depends on the permeability of the rock, the size of gold particles to be dissolved, temperature and other variables. It can vary from a few weeks to months. When that batch of ore is stripped of its gold, more is added, and the cycle continued. Back in the 1950s, before the dastardly effects of long term exposure to low-level radiation were appreciated, the Atomic Energy Commission was working on a program to fracture mountains with nuclear explosives and heap-leach the whole thing in-situ, on a leach cycle which would require years.

This particular wild idea never came to fruition, but in-situ leaches (usually underground) are widely used for the extraction of other thinly-disseminated metals and minerals today, and the cyanide heap-leach is the vehicle which is producing more gold world-wide than any other. In fact, some of the most profitable heap-leach operations have been the leaching of tailings (previously processed ore) and dumps (low-grade,

mined rock too lean to process before), because the cost of mining or milling the ore has already been borne by the old-timers who abandoned it.

The surge in the price of gold has made possible a great deal of research and development in the field of extractive technology, and has allowed the use of reagents which before were very efficient, but too expensive to be cost-effective. There are hundreds of lixivants which will dissolve gold; everything from camel pee and vinegar, table salt and battery acid (which produces deadly chlorine gas), to iodine salts or thiourea solutions. At the leading edge of alternative lixivants is thiourea, first used for gold extraction in the USSR in the early 1940s. Cyanide must have an alkaline environment or it will release the cyanide as hydro-cyanic acid gas, which then must be replaced with more cyanide salts, and is potentially deadly in confined areas. A lot of the best ores are sulfides, which are acidic, and the pH must be adjusted to safe levels before the cyanide is added, and when some ores break down during the leach the pH drops again, requiring the addition of



**ABOVE:** Back-breaking work even with machines and power tools, labor here is harder as it must be done by hand because the proximity of other workings prevents the use of power equipment.

**RIGHT:** Miner cuts timbers for hardrock mine in Diwalwal. Underground mines can often be "hardrock" in name only, with ever-present danger of cave-ins. Here, workings are so close the structural integrity of the mine is often compromised to getting every bit of highgrade ore.



**ABOVE:** Proper dress for a mine owner in this lawless shantytown includes a 1911A1 Colt in the belt. From the NPA to garden-variety thieves, the living can be as hard as the work.



gold wasn't going to the NPA, but the miners just wanted to be left alone. Savedra explained that he resolved the impasse by using a battery of 105mm howitzers to obliterate a hill within sight of the town. The implied threat must have been clearly understood, because there are now three military checkpoints around Diwalwal. The Colonel says that he would like to disarm the miners, but that he doesn't have enough troops. For now, it remains a wide-open town.

Presently the major concern is an attempt by the huge Apex Mining Company to gain control of the area. Diwalwal angrily denies the Apex assertion that they own the land. While the lawyers argue, the company has begun operations just below the town. Should Apex try to take the land by force, the miners swear they will fight.

"Gold fever" has built many boom towns in Mindanao. Along the banks of the Hijo River a bustling shantytown has grown around an abandoned open-pit mine. The land legally belongs to the North Davao Mining Company, but this technicality didn't stop thousands of squatters from moving in after the company ceased operations in the area.

Gold was discovered here in World War II when the Japanese were digging defensive positions against the Americans, and men have been tearing up the countryside in search of the stuff ever since.

The NPA was quick to exploit the squatters' camp. Unlike Diwalwal, the NPA "taxed" the miners here to the tune of millions. The small army detachment in the area immediately concluded a non-

*Continued on page 76*

more costly reagents. Thiourea, on the other hand, works only in an acid environment, and is a quantum leap ahead of cyanide in how fast it is able to dissolve gold.

One proprietary thiourea-based leach will dissolve 100-mesh gold in 10 minutes, which would require many hours in even hot-strong cyanide. This helps balance the fact that thiourea is best used in a stronger (and thus more expensive) solution. Thiourea is also very barely toxic compared to cyanide, and is readily converted to a safe fertilizer when you're done with it. And the Green Peace types are more likely to leave you alone to get your work done. The People's Republic of China is currently the world's largest producer of thiourea, and experiments are being conducted there and in the United States which would allow electro-winning the gold directly from the thiourea pulp (milled ore), which can represent a considerable savings because filtering the very-finely milled ore can be an expensive and time-consuming proposition.

Other developments aimed at cutting steps (and costs) revolve around the

addition of charcoal or ion-exchange resins directly to the batch of milled ore; once the gold is extracted from the ore by the lixiviant, it is collected on the resin or charcoal, which is then simply screened from the pulp.

Other leading-edge developments, some now in operation, center around what amounts to chemical milling of the ore, using pressure-cooker techniques to break down sulfide minerals (thus exposing the gold) similar to those used to break down sulfides in nickel-cobalt and platinum-group extraction. South Africa has produced a system using bacteria to break down sulfide ores. A little microbe named *thiobacillus ferroxidans*, as his name implies, eats sulfur for a living, and will break down sulfide minerals to get it, exposing any gold hidden in the pyrite crystal in the process of preparing his lunch! Another microbe, recently discovered by accident when a U.S. researcher was thin-sectioning gold nuggets, is *bacillus cereus*. This little fellow eats gold from natural solutions in the soil (probably from humic acid solutions) and builds himself a golden overcoat for protection

against other microbes. In a mechanism not yet understood, the gold overcoat keeps on growing after the bug is dead, actually building nuggets. This is regarded as one explanation of how reclaimable nuggets are found years later in placer deposits which had been efficiently and thoroughly worked out. Yup, they grew there anew, thanks to this microbe.

And if that strikes you as one more wild miner's yarn, consider this: certain plants are known for their varying abilities to collect certain metals. Tomato plants, for instance, collect them all. Plants in the nightshade family tend to collect gold from natural ground solutions, it is hypothesized because they carry a natural cyanogen ion. So does the common horsetail rush. Collecting various plants and assaying their ashes has long been used as a prospecting technique for various metals. And now the Soviets are planting thousands of acres of cucumbers on gold-bearing soil in a large scale experiment. I kid you not. And the lusty quest for gold continues.

— Don McLean



# POISON IN PARADISE



As in any frustrating war, keeping count can sometimes help morale. This tally on Coast Guard vessel records drug busts. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard

## South America's Deadly Drugs Flow Through Bimini

by Joe Abaco

**I**N the middle of the Gulf Stream, between Miami and Bimini, a tropical squall slices silver froth from the tops of great sullen seas. The sleek schooner groans under her press of drum-tight canvas. White water rushes by, some splashing over the bulwarks onto her decks, to spit out the lee scuppers.

The captain feels the wheel buck under his hands as water smacks the rudder. He fights to hold the vessel from surging into the wind. Bronzed by years at sea under tropic sun, his gaze sweeps the horizon where dawn is unveiling a new day. He eyes the shear of the schooner's deck and the tapering ascent of her shrouds. He is proud of this schooner. They have been together a long time and Bimini, just beginning to appear off the bow, has been a port of call for twenty years.

"Ease the main," he softly says.

The mate responds by uncleaning the main sheet, quickly paying it out. He is tall and well-muscled; a man with skin scarred by the Ranch Hand program, who left part of a lung at some firebase near Phu Bai, while serving with Charlie Beckwith in the 101st.

Bimini lies low on the western edge of the Great Bahama bank. The eastern boundary of the Gulf Stream marks the entrance to the

harbor, a scant 53 nautical miles from Miami. It is seven miles long, very narrow and flat. Nowhere is there an elevation more than 15-20 feet above sea level. There are no navigational aids. If one doesn't have local knowledge, he is wise to anchor offshore. The bones of many ships are scattered on the beach and outer reef.

Sweat soaks through the clothes of the charter guests on board. Some have already stripped to bikinis, smearing suntan oil on pale skins in hopes of returning to Wisconsin with the enviable tan, a confirmation of the successful vacation.

### SKIPPER AND SCRIBE

Captain Joe Abaco spent two years active duty with the U.S. Marine Corps, and a total of 11 years in the U.S. Army Special Forces Reserve. Graduating from the University of Miami with a degree in education, Capt. Abaco has been a teacher, a stringer for AP in Vietnam, and a reporter for the *Miami Beach Sun*. He is now full-time skipper of a tall ship which plies the Caribbean waters with tourists, and is still a member of the Special Forces Reserve.

From the distance they appear as little more than dots. Long before you hear them, you see the low, sleek, high-tech racing hulls speeding from the harbor. They remind me of the swift boats operating from Monkey Mountain in I Corps that patrolled north to the Ben Hai. As they come closer the symphony of sweetly-tuned, very powerful engines fills the ear. The fast movers turn in single file, roaring across the curling reef at just the correct spot, and lay a course for a rusting freighter about 150 feet long, maybe 200 tons, under Panamanian flag, drifting just inside the edge of the Gulf Stream.

Our captain squints and shakes his head. He still looks like a soldier, I have to admit, with wide shoulders, narrow waist and long, knotted muscles. And if his body didn't give him away, his eyes would.

"That rust bucket is as out of place here as a leg at an airborne convention" he hisses, pointing to the freighter. "I hope they bust his ass ASAP."

The lead Cigarette, powered with three, 375-horsepower Merc-cruisers breaks from the pack and roars by the schooner's stern, delighting the guests who think it great romantic stuff. Both captains casually wave to each other. The native skipper makes a tight showboat turn and gets in line as the



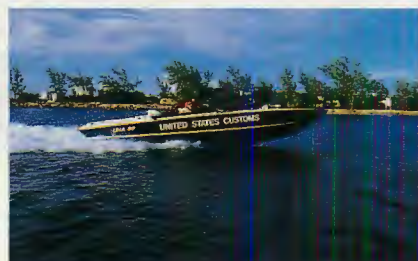
**ABOVE:** Once searched, jacketed and cuffed, suspects are taken aboard U.S.C.G. UTB (utility boat) for detention, transportation and processing. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard



**Don Manuel** out of Miami is boarded...



...is found dirty...



**ABOVE:** Well-funded smugglers aren't the *only* ones out there with super-fast boats. Here U.S. Customs Service *Blue Thunder* gets a shakedown cruise off Miami. It takes one to catch one. Photo: Marty Casey



...is thoroughly searched...



...and the smugglers are transported to a Coast Guard cutter. Photos: U.S. Coast Guard

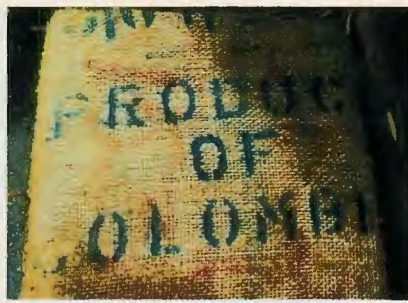
**LOWER LEFT:** Photos taken by tourist aboard schooner off Florida coast show smuggler who mistakes them for his mother ship. Photo: courtesy Capt. Joe

**BELOW:** Oops, well I guess I'll have to find somebody else to give this dirty money to. Photo: courtesy Capt. Joe





Running dope is a high-risk, high-profit business. This arsenal, confiscated by the Coast Guard, was intended by smugglers to protect their investment. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard



As if there were any doubt; nearly all the cocaine smuggled into the U.S. comes from Colombia and Bolivia. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard



Good Guys have guns, too. Coast Guard issues M16A1s, M1911A1 .45s, and 12 gauge riot guns to boarding parties. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard



ABOVE: Suspect aboard commercial vessel is questioned by Coast Guard and Task Force personnel. Coast Guard representatives state that commercial shipping used to be wide open (see sidebar), but fear lower confiscation rates in 1987 only indicate other channels are being used to smuggle the deadly contraband. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard

BELOW: Sometimes it takes more than an authoritative voice on the radio to stop a suspected smuggler; a 20 mm automatic cannon is a powerful persuader. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard



## SO, HOW GOES THE WAR, MR. BUSH?

In 1985, the Coast Guard confiscated 2,300,000 pounds of marijuana. The tally for 1987 was 1,208,747 pounds of marijuana, 13,922 pounds of cocaine, 37 gallons of hash oil, and 17 miscellaneous doses of dangerous drugs, having an estimated street value of \$2,522,000,000. Do these numbers mean the Vice President's Task Force is stemming the tide?

Regrettably, the Coast Guard doesn't think so. The grass is higher quality than was being imported in 1980-85, and the street price for cocaine is lower, indicating a plentiful supply. What this probably means is that more dope is being smuggled by automobile, by air, and in smaller and more numerous lots by sea.

The days of wide-open sea traffic may be waning, but production and consumption are up, and in between lies a virtual army of smugglers and corrupt foreign officials who will compromise their fellow man for a dirty dollar.



This mountain of misery will not reach Mainstreet, U.S.A. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard

crane on the freighter begins to swing the bales of pot over the side in its cargo net.

Moving the wheel slowly in concert with wind and sea conditions, the schooner captain puts the bowsprit over a range marking the deep water into Bimini harbor. He doesn't want to be anywhere near this scene when DEA and U.S. Customs arrive in their Blackhawks. He does give grudging admiration to the crew of the mother ship.

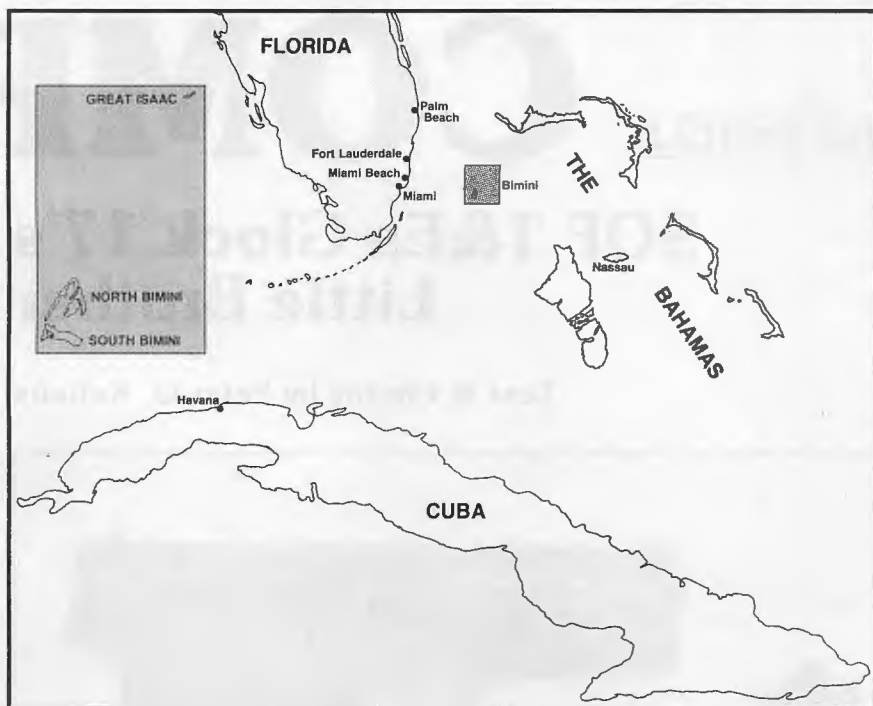
He knows that after loading the pot or cocaine off the Colombian coast, the ship's voyage to Bimini unbusted is a combination of seamanship and luck. They had to evade the U.S. Coast Guard picket line in the Windward and Mona passages between Cuba and Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Navy P3 flights, DEA and Customs air surveillance combined with satellite heat sensors, and a variety of other ELINT methods of "eye in the sky" detection had to be avoided. They probably zigged and zagged around the southern Bahamas threading their way to the beginning of the Northeast Providence channel between Great Abaco and Eleuthera, a smuggler's choke-point known as "Hole in the Wall" and arguably the "hottest" area in the Caribbean. Once down the channel, only 40 miles wide, if they have not been seen, they make a southerly turn at Great Isaacs light, a lone sentinel on an outcropping of rock near Grand Bahama island. Here the pucker factor goes off the meter. They waddle along the Bimini coast preparing to offload their horror of drugs . . . or to be boarded by U.S. Customs, Coast Guard or Bahamian Defence Forces.

As we line up to enter the deep water between reef and sandbar, I look over my shoulder expecting the cavalry at any moment. I mean, that sinister hulk is really out of place off this sportfishing and diving paradise. Too ugly. Too rusted. Too deeply-laden. The waterline isn't even showing. It begs to be busted. It is almost noon. If allowed to complete its offload Bimini once more will swell with white poison, dream smoke and burlap bags filled with hundreds of thousands of dollars. Running rum during prohibition was good business. Running pot and cocaine today is *great* business.

Bimini was once a home for Ernest Hemingway. Zane Grey fished these waters. It was a hideout for Harlem Congressman Adam "Keep the Faith Baby" Powell. It is still a playground for deep-sea fishing and scuba diving. buffs. Gary Hart and others seek sun, surf and sex.

Over the past ten years, Bimini has evolved from a sleepy island tourist destination into a forward operating base for Colombian drug kingpins. Robert Vesco has assisted cocaine czar Carlos Lehder (recently convicted of drug trafficking in Jacksonville, Florida) from this tiny island. Vesco now lives comfortably in Havana, which is only a two-day sail from Bimini. His buddy Fidel uses this area of the Great Bahama bank to send his agents into the United States.

On an afternoon tide with a brisk south-east wind blowing, the schooner comes



**Not merely a thorn in our side, dope portal Bimini is a knife at our throat, only miles away from Florida's major ports, and hundreds of secluded inlets.**

shouldering into Bimini harbor, topmast bent like a coachwhip, straining to the pull of her grey, patched sails, her lee scuppers smothered in a flurry of foam. As she rounds the end of Buccaneer Point on South Bimini, the mate fists in the topsail and drops the jib. A crowd gathers on shore. They wave and give thumbs up. The captain smiles, waves back and then gazes over his shoulder. He breaks up laughing. "You thought the cheers were for you and this piece of wood and canvas?" I said, looking astern.

"Yeah, for a moment. I mean, what the hell, this *is* the last Bahamian schooner built in these islands."

The objects of the crowd's interest roar by, kicking up a series of rooster-tail wakes that wet us down. The charter guests cheer. The first offload of drugs is complete. Three coal-black, 40-foot Magnum speed boats have sped past, fully loaded, burlap bags sticking out everywhere, with only inches of freeboard to spare, disappearing down the harbor. The crowd moves in the same direction. We slat around in their wake, alone again, a sailing ship in a Mach II world.

Joseph Conrad spoke of a shadow line, that faint demarcation between a way of life that is vanishing and another that is inexorably taking its place. The next fast mover that raced by, just as the schooner was easing to the dock, punctuated that wisdom.

Bimini harbor sparkled in the late afternoon sun, reflecting the shining brilliance like a handful of dropped diamonds. Fragile island fishing smacks rocked gently in the wake of the fast movers. Three more dope machines churned from the harbor toward the open sea for another load from the

mother ship. Dogs and natives moved in the shade of banana palms. Mixed in with this tropical setting I see three tall Aryan types with the bearing and demeanor of soldiers; obviously the rumors were true. There was work here for the trained freelance. Two former "Green Beanies" told me the slots were all filled with Germans.

The freighter had now been swinging her bales of "square grouper" (as pot is known in the Bahamas) over the side and into the waiting boats for over four hours, and still hadn't been detected.

I watched the captain and mate as they readied docking lines. Here were specifics of Conrad's thought. Two warriors living in their own world with a personal code of Bushido that keeps them intact. Life at five knots under sail in the computer age was fine with them. They reminded me of the men who served in SOG — the ultimate soldiers, professional warriors, not merely military careerists punching their ticket. When the captain was loaned to SOG from "the Company" to which he had been on loan from Special Forces, he was a man totally out of place anywhere but doing his job over the fence, even though he had gone to the Citadel and had an RA commission.

Lines were tossed to the dock by the mate. The captain holds the schooner bow to current, as the dockmaster takes our lines, hampered by the hoard of gold around his black neck, wrist and fingers. Mr. "T" could take lessons from this guy. He sloppily drops the lines after cleating them and without word, saunters away. Only then did I notice his eyes were glazed over in a cocaine high.

Ten years ago I had docked here on the same schooner. Then Bimini was pretty, well-kept, and a picture-postcard island.

*Continued on page 82*

# COMPACT

## SOF T&Es Glock 17's Little Brother

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



**LEFT:** Glock Model 19 prototype with 15-round magazine and magazine loader. Production series versions will feature cross-checked slide serrations with a frame of slightly different configuration in the grip area.

**ABOVE:** Glock's new Model 19 Compact exhibits the same excellent handling characteristics, combined with MilSpec reliability and superb accuracy, as the original Glock 17. The dubious fetish of a squared off and stippled trigger guard is not used by those firing from the correct Weaver position.

**N**O handgun has ever induced a greater frenzy of hysteria on the part of anti-gun politicians and their sympathetic media myrmidons than the Glock 17. Yet, none of their contentions are true. It is not invisible when passed through an X-ray screen. It cannot pass through properly monitored metal detectors without notice. And, it is most certainly not "all plastic," as by weight the Glock pistol is 83 percent steel. This so-called "detectability" issue has been raised in no country outside of the United States.

Gaston Glock's 9mm Parabellum pistol was first introduced to the American public by *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine almost four years ago (See "Plastic Perfection," SOF, October '84). Since that time more than 350 U.S. local law enforcement and federal agencies have adopted or authorized the Glock as a duty weapon. In addition to Austria, the armed forces of both Norway and the Netherlands have adopted the Glock. Law enforcement agencies and military units in Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela and West Germany issue the Glock as their standard sidearm. Tens of thousands have been sold to the U.S. public, and hundreds of thousands worldwide.

Glock has just announced the introduction of a new compact version, called the Model 19, and a long-slide target version — the Model 17L with 6-inch barrel and muzzle compensator. Also available, albeit only to law enforcement agencies, is the Model 18, a machine pistol with 33-round magazines. SOF's test specimen of the production series Model 19 has an overall length of 7.4 inches, a height, with sights, of 4.64 inches and a width of 1.18 inches. The barrel length is 4 inches. In overall length, height and barrel length, the Model 19 is

½-inch shorter than its predecessor. The weight remains approximately the same at 23 ounces with an empty magazine. Of this mass, almost 19 ounces represents the steel components. To preserve the operational reliability of the short-recoil system, the slide's mass was not reduced. With the exception of the slide, frame, barrel, locking block, recoil spring, guide rod and slide lock spring, all of the other components are interchangeable between the models 17 and 19. There are only 35 parts in the Glock pistol, including the magazine. Glock says there are 33, but I count the sights and trigger spring cups as two components each. Of little matter, as in either case, this is still less than half the number of bits and pieces found in competing designs.

The Glock's remarkable record of success in just four years is matched by its even



Apparently invisible only to anti-gun U.S. Congressmen, the Glock pistol can be detected by all modern airport security systems when operated by trained personnel, as demonstrated by this X-ray. Photo: Glock, Inc.

# PERFECTION



more remarkable design. Glock's only condescension to conventionality is the pistol's method of operation. Short recoil operated, the barrel is locked to the slide by a single lug which recesses into the ejection port, in the manner of the SIG-Sauer series. During

the recoil stroke the barrel moves rearward approximately 3 millimeters until the bullet leaves the barrel and pressures drop downward, separating from the slide and terminating any further motion. The slide's continued rearward movement and counter-recoil cycle are those of the Browning system.

Hammerless and striker-fired, the Glock's trigger and firing pin mechanisms are innovative and mostly unique. There is no manually operated thumb safety or decocking lever. A so-called "Safe Action" trigger system, patterned after that encountered on the Sauer Behorden ("Authority") Model 1930 caliber 7.65mm pocket pistol, constitutes the first failsafe. A wide outer trigger (serrated, on the new Model 19) encompasses a small, spring-loaded inner trigger, both fabricated from polymer. The outer trigger cannot be actuated, such as by contact with a holster, unless the inner trigger is depressed first. Thus the trigger can be pulled only from the center, not the edges.

A spring-loaded firing pin safety in the slide blocks forward movement of the striker, and is raised and deactivated by a projection on the sheet-metal trigger bar as the trigger is pulled to its final rearward position.

When the trigger is in the forward position, the firing pin's spring remains lightly compressed. As the trigger is pulled 10mm through its first stage (with a pull weight of approximately 2.2 pounds), its full compression is almost complete. Removal of the firing from the trigger at this time will re-

turn the firing pin spring to its partially compressed, "relaxed" and completely safe state. Continued pressure at this point will 1. Draw the firing pin fully rearward and its spring into complete compression; and then 2. Draw the T-shaped end of the trigger bar to its final rearward position in the trigger housing's stepped safety notch; so that 3. It is free to drop downward away from both the "connector" (sear) and a projection at the end of the striker to release the firing pin and fire the round. The firing pin is rectangular in cross-section with a chisel-shaped tip. Although primers are left with an instantly identifiable indentation, the striker's unorthodox configuration produces less drag on the primer (eliminating the possibility of firing pin breakage) and



Glock Model 19 in Bruce Nelson's #1 Professional hand-fitted leather holster, with its double belt-loop system to pull the grip area of the frame into the body, maximizes the pistol's concealment potential and can be worn either strong-side or cross-draw.



Illustrated is the correct procedure for separating the slide from the frame as explained in the text.



**ABOVE:** Unique factory cut-away shows the Glock's spring-loaded firing pin safety blocking the striker's forward movement.

**LEFT:** Glock Model 19 completely disassembled into its 35 separate components.

## GLOCK 19 SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Caliber:</b>	.....9x19 Parabellum.
<b>Operation:</b>	.....Short recoil, barrel locks with single lug into ejection port, semiautomatic, hammerless, Safe Action double-trigger system with two additional internal automatic safeties.
<b>Number of parts including magazine:</b>	.....35.
<b>Weight, empty:</b>	.....21 ounces; magazine: 2 ounces.
<b>Overall length:</b>	.....7.4 inches.
<b>Height, with sights:</b>	.....4.64 inches.
<b>Width:</b>	.....1.18 inches.
<b>Barrel:</b>	.....Hexagonal rifling with a right-hand twist of one turn in 9.84 inches.
<b>Barrel length:</b>	.....4 inches.
<b>Magazines:</b>	.....Single-position feed, staggered column box-type; polymer construction with steel liners; 15, 17, 19 and 33-round capacities.
<b>Sights:</b>	.....Fixed polymer front sight with white dot, 0.12" thick; fixed, polymer, white-outline (four heights available) or fully adjustable rear sights. Optional Arson Self Luminous Trijicon steel front and rear sights. Sight radius: 6 inches.
<b>Metal finish:</b>	.....Tenifer process — non-glare matte; 99% salt water corrosion resistant; meets or exceeds stainless steel specifications.
<b>Manufacturer:</b>	.....Glock GmbH, Produkte aus Kunststoffe, Metallwaren und Holz, Dept. SOF, 2232 Duetsch-Wagram, Hausfeldstrasse 17, Austria.
<b>Importer:</b>	.....Glock, Inc., Dept. SOF, Suite 190, 5000 Highlands Parkway, Smyrna, GA 30080 (phone: 404-432-1202)
<b>Price:</b>	.....\$511.
<b>Status:</b>	.....In service with the armed forces of the Netherlands, Norway and Austria; adopted or authorized for service by 350 U.S. local law enforcement and federal agencies; in service with police or military units of Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela and West Germany.
<b>T&amp;E summary:</b>	.....High impact polymer frame reduces perceived recoil; three safety systems eliminate the need for a manual thumb safety; hammerless design eliminates need for hammer-drop lever; highest possible level of reliability; hit probability and accuracy potential at maximum levels; recommended without reservations of any kind for all military, law enforcement and self-defense applications.

concentrates its momentum onto a smaller area to ensure positive ignition. A fluted firing pin, which permits the Glock pistol to be fired underwater, is available to legitimate government agencies only. A stamped sheet-metal ejector, with an odd-looking inward cant, is permanently attached to the polymer trigger housing.

Further explanation of the connector is required. This sheet-metal component also serves as a disconnecter. When the slide moves forward in counter-recoil, a hump above the rail on the right side pushes the connector away from the trigger bar to prevent another round from being fired until the trigger is released and the trigger bar moves forward. The angle between the connector's upper face and its bottom face determines the trigger pull weight of the second stage. An angle of 90 degrees will produce the standard pull weight of 5 pounds. A pull weight of 8 pounds is achieved by increasing the angle to 105 degrees (it is stamped with a "+"). A pull weight of 3½ pounds, available only with the new Long Slide Target Model 17, is obtained when the angle is reduced to 75 degrees. If the pistol is to be stored for any length of time, the trigger should remain in the retracted position to remove all tension on the firing pin spring.

This triple-safe trigger mechanism is housed in the high-impact polymer frame that initiated the pistol's unjustified controversy. All the more strange as Heckler & Koch's VP70z and P9s pistols, both introduced more than a decade ago, were fabricated with largely polycarbonate frames. Four steel guide rails (about .4 inches in length) for the the slide have been integrated into the injection-molded frame, in pairs at the rear of the frame and above and in front of the trigger guard on the Glock series. To meet BATF regulations, a steel plate carrying the serial number has been embedded into the frame in front of the trigger guard. The trigger guard has been squared off and stippled, but those who fire from the correct Weaver position will not use this dubious fetish.

The grip-to-frame angle of the Model 19 remains that of the Glock 17 which is somewhat steeper than competing designs. However, there is a heavier non-slip, stipple effect on the sides of the grip and both the front and rear straps are grooved. As there are no separate grip panels, the grip portion of the pistol accomodates normal-sized hands despite its large magazine capacity.

The locking block, which engages a 45-degree camming surface on the barrel's lower lug, appears to be the Glock's only investment casting. It's retained in the frame by the same steel axis pin that holds the trigger and slide stop. The trigger housing is attached to the frame by means of a polymer pin. A spring-loaded, sheet-metal pressing serves as the slide stop, which is protected from accidental manipulation by a raised guard molded into the frame. The

*Continued on page 76*

# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 21

mujahideen.

A final related means of communication, most often associated with urban-based insurgencies, is the letter drop. In many metropolitan settings where a group must operate covertly, especially in its early developmental stages, letter drops provide the primary means for the secure and reliable communication of orders from a group commander to subordinate cells. In some instances where urban terrorism is undertaken, as in Algiers in the late 1950s, this was the only system used to communicate orders to a bomb placing network. It offers cellular security and multiple disconnects, and is extremely difficult to trace without inside information.

Although many Third World countries lack an extensive telephone network, some insurgent groups have found this common link to be tactically useful and expedient.

Using the established telephone links can, however, present some obvious hazards for operations security. For example, international phone service from Afghanistan was formerly routed through Paris. Under Soviet occupation, outside telephone links are now routed through Moscow.

Nevertheless, within secure areas, telephone systems have been established to support the mujahideen. During a period of important tactical operations in the Hazara region, the mujahideen established a telephone link between their military headquarters and five other outlying towns. The open link provided adequate message capability and afforded an exceptional degree of control, allowing for timely redirection of reinforcements during the operation.

Some Afghan leaders have found it useful to string telephone lines themselves, as did Castro during the Cuban insurgency. A typical example is that of the headquarters of the *Jamiat-i-Islami* mujahideen in the Marmoul gorge. This site, at the base of dizzying cliffs, could only be approached frontally through a narrow entrance. Within was a command center, a mosque, assembly hall, kitchens, foundry and quarters, with electricity supplied from diesel generators. Located high on crags above the gorge were 24-hour lookout positions with a commanding view of the airfield at Mazar-i-Sharif. Connected by telephone to the headquarters below, the lookouts could report any activity by the Soviet choppers on the field in time for defensive actions to be taken.

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A final illustration of the utility of the telephone system in unconventional applications comes from the Congo of 1960. There, one of the most effective urban nets was established in Elizabethville, where European settler women would pass the positions of the U.N. occupation troops to the mercenaries' command post, and would even provide telephone spotting for mortar assaults.

Tactical radio equipment among insurgent forces can be generally characterized as simple and opportunistic; opportunistic in the sense that much of their gear is actually captured enemy communications equipment. It is simple in that much of what actually is purchased is commercial, off-the-shelf hardware usually intended for some other application. Sophisticated systems with encryption devices and high-power, long-haul communications are rare.

The most common radio is the walkie-talkie type, and it is in general use with insurgents around the globe. The contra forces are reported to be well equipped with this type of hand-held radio and many news service photos show one or more squad members holding a Motorola-type walkie-talkie. Reports from El Salvador suggest widespread use of Japanese commercial-grade, hand-held transceivers among insurgents there.

Even in the impoverished wastelands of the Ethiopian insurgency, guerrillas of the Oromo Liberation Front operating near the Sudanese border use walkie-talkies for squad coordination within their columns and for scouting reports.

Although initially wary, the Afghan resistance is reported to be making increasing use of walkie-talkies for tactical applications. Both commercial and captured Soviet equipment have been reported in use. Such use of captured equipment has become a primary supply source for the insurgent forces, but, unlike the situation with rifles and ammunition, the Afghans and others usually do not have the expertise to utilize or repair the full range of captured Russian communications gear. However, as more Afghan Army defectors come over with their equipment, more and more issue Soviet communications hardware may be put into use by the mujahideen.

Use of captured equipment offers significant advantages to the insurgent forces and, whenever possible, communications gear is liberated as a priority item along with weapons and ammunition. This is equally true with the contras who, for example, after downing a Soviet-built aircraft, removed two pieces of equipment — a 7.62mm machine gun and a badly damaged radio. If operable, captured equipment could permit the insurgents

to more easily monitor enemy communications. It could also provide equipment for their own use which would "blend" into the electromagnetic spectrum, especially in the case of Afghanistan where Soviet communications gear is apparently very standardized. Finally, and this is particularly true in Afghanistan, captured communications equipment without immediate value can be sold or exchanged for more urgently needed equipment. This type of barter is efficiently used by the mujahideen.

Some insurgent forces such as the contra groups have been able to obtain additional types of equipment for longer range communications. PRC-25 field radios were noted in use for intelligence reporting in 1983. In November 1987, a contra group in Jinotega Province, some 100 miles north of the capital, was photographed by the *Washington Post* using a field radio with what was described as a "computerized decoder" for tactical communications.

Other groups have made innovative use of off-the-shelf commercial equipment to satisfy their tactical communications requirements. One typical example is found with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), conducting an insurgency against the Burmese government from base areas along the Thai border. Here, the KNLA Seventh Brigade headquarters uses a Japanese CB radio as its primary link to its subordinate command posts. The antenna is very practically hooked to a bamboo rafter of the thatched command hut.

Similarly, taxi radios are reported in use among other insurgent forces. These offer the advantages of easy procurement, blending with existing communications, and portability. In El Salvador, government forces recently ambushed a guerrilla column of five trucks led by a passenger car equipped in this manner as a command vehicle.

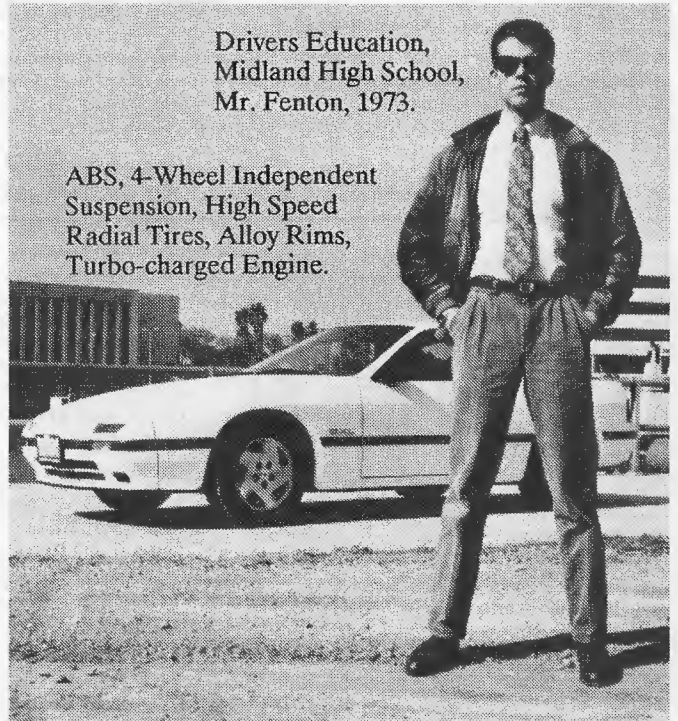
The ability to make do with whatever equipment is on his shelf is a hallmark of the guerrilla. This innovativeness in communications techniques is well-illustrated by a description of communications coordination during a contra airdrop. One typical mission involved a low-level drop of supplies from a Caribou flying out of Honduras. Most aviators in the lift group spoke only English, while the contras on the ground in general spoke only Spanish. Therefore, as a rule, most resupply missions flew with a contra radioman. In fact, one of the three men killed in action on the Hasensuf flight was just such a "talker."

About 20 miles out from the drop zone (DZ), the aircraft would attempt radio contact. But, the noise from the engines was so loud that the talker had

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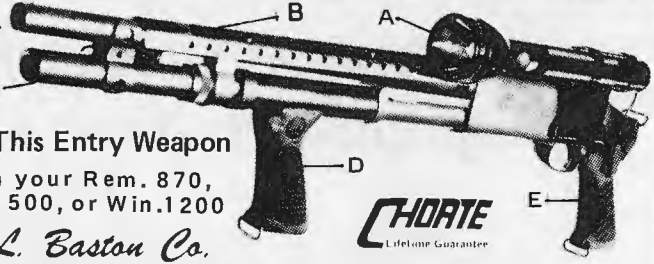
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to jam the speaker against one ear while covering the other to block the background noise. Once contact was made, the talker would ask the DZ for directions based on the sound of their approaching aircraft, and the pilot would maneuver north/south, left/right as the talker yelled up directions to the cockpit. Once the flight crew spotted the contras' signal fires, they would have the talker confirm the number by radio to make sure of the DZ before making the drop pass. Not an easy way to make a living — and this was an example when everything went according to the plan.

"Any tendency to consider the guerilla force too unsophisticated to acquire communications intelligence must be avoided." These words from the U.S. Army's field manual on low intensity conflict should be well-marked, and heeded by any counter-insurgency force.

Virtually all unconventional forces have displayed an awareness of the value of signals intelligence and the ability to exploit it. As early as 1961, Katangan mercenaries were able to copy United Nations reports on their strength and disposition, and to exploit these to their own advantage. Under siege at Bukavu in 1967, one of the Belgian mercenary pilots trapped with the ground forces was able to enter the radio net of the attacking aircraft, determine its objectives, and evacuate the target area before the attack. Similarly, there were many instances during the Biafran insurgency where rebels were able to successfully intercept and exploit communications of the federal Nigerian forces.

Reports from Central America indicate that contra forces are able to tune in and copy certain Sandinista radio traffic as well. In some cases, both Cuban advisers to the Sandinistas and the contra opposition are reported to have entered each other's nets to exchange boasts, challenges, insults, and to feed deception schemes.

In Afghanistan, it is interesting to note that the initial and much-ballyhooed Soviet troop withdrawals probably included their sophisticated electronic combat units, which had proved to be of little practical value against the mujahideen. Since that time, some Afghan units are reported to have been able to intercept Soviet and Afghan Army transmissions, but there is little evidence that they have been able to exploit this to much tactical advantage.

One of the most dramatic examples of sophisticated mujahideen communications involves Ahmad Massoud, the Panjsher regional leader whom the Soviets are reported to have targeted for assassination in 1984. It is reported that he uncovered, and there-



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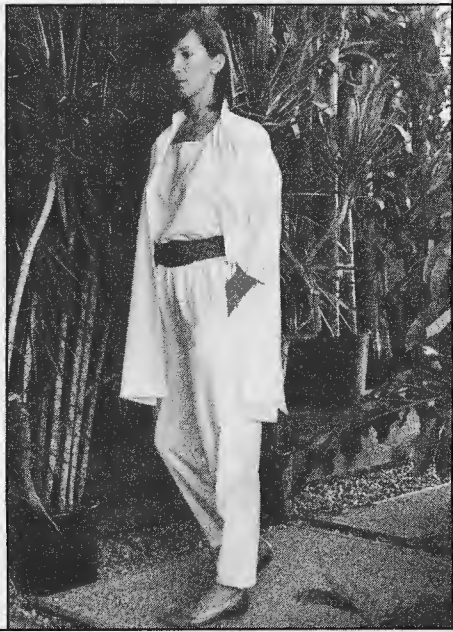
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fore escaped, the assassination plot, and within hours of the overly optimistic Soviet announcements of his death, Massoud was able to impudently intrude on Soviet military radio nets to describe the weather, Soviet positions, and the casualties of the day.

In discussing communications operations, it must be remembered that signals intelligence is a double-edged sword for the insurgent. A good example is the recent experience of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador. Here the government has set up tracking stations on the higher elevations, equipped with scanners to pick up the low-power guerrilla radios. A collocated direction finder provides bearing information for the government forces. This can also provide an approximate strength count by applying a rough rule of one radio for each 8-10 insurgents. This simple approach, using readily available, lightweight equipment similar to that of the USMC radio recon teams, is suitable for widespread use by both government and insurgent forces worldwide.

In summary, we can conclude that communications to support unconventional forces evolve as the scope of their operations expand. While relying on simplicity and innovation to fulfill communications requirements, the opportunity to take advantage of captured enemy equipment is seldom overlooked.

Supporting the overall force and its tactical operations is an intelligence network based primarily on human intelligence (HUMINT). While heavy reliance is placed on the HUMINT system, insurgent forces are demonstrating a capability for signals intelligence of increasing sophistication.

Our challenge, faced with such an innovative and adaptable adversary, is to be open-minded in our evaluation of his true capabilities and equally flexible in developing an effective counter-strategy. ✕

## GOLD HUNTING

*Continued from page 57*

Western standards the marker was fairly universal, a straight stick with sharpened small sticks tied at right angles to it. I noted to my guide that "the trail must go that way now." He quickly corrected me. The marker was not pointing out the direction of the trail, but warning of pig traps that had been set. These traps are usually 4x4x6-foot camouflaged pits with sharpened bamboo "pungi" stakes on the bottom. Other traps, more dangerous, use explosive boobytraps, either jerry-rigged Japanese grenades from WWII or home-made pipe bomb type devices. There are no park rangers or con-

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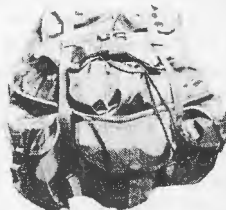
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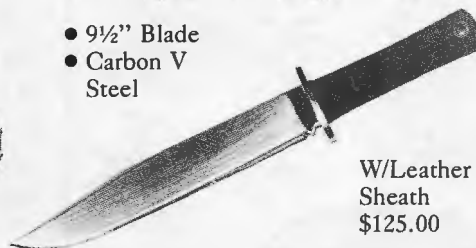
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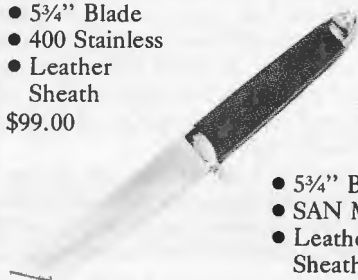
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servation officers out there to contend with.

Another advantage of having Negrito guides, when it comes to locating potential treasure locations, is their nomadic lifestyle. My guides live and wander in the Zambales mountain range in the southwestern section of Luzon, where we are currently conducting our primary search efforts. As this is their home turf, Negritos often come across caves and tunnels in their wanderings, scout them, and inform us of their find.

There are literally hundreds of caves and tunnels in the Zambales, built by the Japanese as part of a huge network of fall-back positions, to which they retreated during the closing years of the war.

Once we find a suitable cave, armed with metal detectors and shovels, we search and dig. We have found innumerable areas where Japanese soldiers lived and died, as witnessed by the wide assortment of items found — helmets, rifles, grenades, and countless human remains. We have found piles of personal items and medical equipment, including hundreds of sealed glass medicine vials with contents intact.

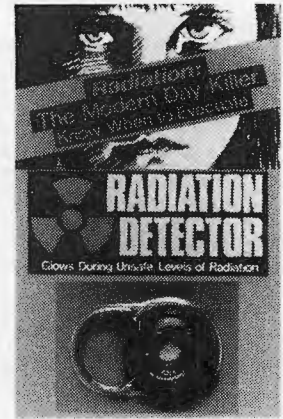
The best cave/command post that we have found thus far revealed our greatest find and held our greatest disappointment. I was told of the location of this cave by one of our scouts who said he and some others had found and dug out the main entrance. Probably some time in 1944, U.S. forces had dynamited the entrances to it, sealing its suicide-bent defenders inside. Negritos had entered the large underground facility and explored part of it before we could get there. In the center of the complex they found a large 2-foot-square steel box locked and sealed with a rubberized compound, unopened since 1944. They pried open the box and, disappointed at only finding paper documents, burned them as torches in order to further explore the tunnels.

After I saw the steel strongbox and envisioned its former contents, (potential treasure maps or war plans and so forth) rolled up and burned as torches, my guides got a quick course in Western-style ass-chewing. When they failed to comprehend my wide assortment of phrases like, "You stupid dumb shits," I reverted to Tagalog and put it in more calm terms they could understand and appreciate.

The command post was an engineering marvel. The facility was carved into a large hill, comprising a series of central rooms linked by tunnels extending like legs from a spider. The tunnels were perfectly hewn from the solid rock of the mountain, as though someone had used an enormous drill. They ran for hundreds of meters in a maze-like array. Fresh air flowed into the tunnels through inlets on one side of the hill and blasted out of the opposite side like air conditioning vents.

We explored the tunnels one by one, walking slowly in the eerie darkness, listening to the electronic beeps of our metal detectors. Hunched over to avoid hitting the low ceiling, I shined my light into the gloomy darkness of the narrow tube we were in, and wondered what I would do if

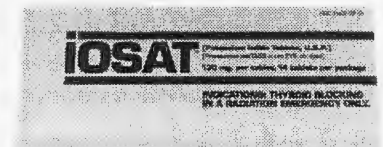
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suddenly a big stone ball started to roll down at us from the shadows, as it did to Indiana Jones. Littered on the floor were pieces of equipment and skeletons of soldiers who had been sealed inside. Some were laid out as if they had simply died in their sleep, others remains were scattered, as if a suicidal grenade blast was the means of hastening their slow, suffocating demise. Death is always associated with the treasure. Japanese soldiers who buried their assigned fortunes guarded it with their lives. Bodies of thousands of Japanese soldiers litter the Philippine mountains. I have seen unmarked sites in the jungle where 20 or 30 men were buried in shallow graves, bleached femurs protruding from the ground in mute testimony to the gruesome misfortunes of war.

I usually cannot stand more than an hour of exploring the narrow tunnels before I have to go out and stand in the bright, sunlit jungle, and momentarily leave behind the nightmarish world of twisted remains, spiders as big as your hand, swarming bats, and equally terrifying, an all too active *imagination*.

I am enough of a realist to know that due to the vast scope of the search area, finding the treasure without a credible map will be basically a stroke of luck. Yet, the possibility of finding the big treasure is enough to lure me into a jungle filled with clouds of anopheles mosquitos and leech-infested streams. After every expedition, at "San Miguel beer time," I vow to never set foot in the mountains again. But, these feelings are short-lived. It was barely two weeks after my last solo reenactment of the Bataan Death March that I was already following another story.

I was visiting, by jeep, a remote village on a mercy mission for some American missionary friends of mine, when they informed me that a month earlier two Japanese individuals had arrived at their house and enquired about obtaining some porters. The lad who was picked to help them told me that the two Japanese had a map and scuba equipment. They dove for several hours in a giant fresh water pool, using a large "electric radio," as he put it. The "electric radio" was probably an underwater metal detector. According to him, they didn't surface with anything, paid him well and left in a 4x4 truck, promising to return. I visited the pool with an elderly member of the village, who remembered that when he was a boy during the war many Japanese troops had lived by the rock pool for a whole dry season. I tucked my pants into my boots and waded knee-deep into the water and stared into the murky depths, watching 6-inch leeches wriggle in a bloodthirsty orgy around my pants legs. Whatever it was the Japanese were seeking, it certainly overshadowed their concern for the leeches.

I stood and thought for a moment, oblivious to the one clever leech who had squeezed past my pants leg. I could walk away, leaving a pool full of disappointed leeches, or . . . hell, the lure of finding *It* was too much. "Anyone have a mask and snorkel I can borrow?"

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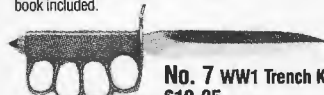
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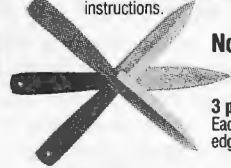


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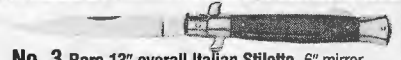


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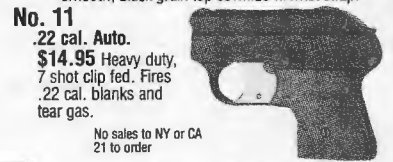
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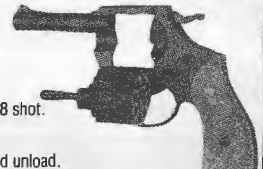


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## GOLD DIGGERS

Continued from page 61

aggression pact with the communists and began imposing their own fees on the miners. If this double-barreled extortion weren't headache enough, rampant lawlessness added to the miner's miseries.

This anarchy persisted until 1987, when the army command finally forced the NPA out of the area, and replaced their corrupt garrison. The earnestness of the army's anti-corruption effort was demonstrated by the presence of the battalion sergeant major during my visit there. He had traveled for hours from his battalion headquarters to investigate a complaint against one of his men. It turned out to be a minor personal argument between one of the soldiers and a local. The sergeant major's concern over such a small incident indicates a professionalism that the earlier detachment lacked.

Increased security, along with the rise in gold prices, prompted the mining company to re-open operations along the river. They gave the squatting miners two weeks to get out. Miners are a breed as hard as the rock they dig and they weren't about to leave quietly. The company realized that a forced eviction could lead to bloodshed and ill feeling within the surrounding community, so they extended the deadline for six months, with the proviso that the miners give them 20 percent of their product. Since they were aware that legally they were trespassing, the deal didn't seem too bad to the miners and it was accepted.

With the government and the big mining companies closing in on all sides, the days of the lawless boom towns and independent miners are numbered. But for now, miners' lives will be dominated by picks and shovels, strong backs and sweat until finally, regrettably, progress relegates this hectic rush for wealth to the colorful pages of Philippine history. ✘

## GLOCK 19

Continued from page 60

slide lock, operated by a single bent flat spring, engages a step on the front of the barrel's locking lug to prevent the slide and frame groups from parting company during the counter-recoil stroke. The magazine catch-release, another polymer component — located where it belongs, on the left side of the frame, directly to the rear of the trigger guard — is held in place by an uncoiled piece of spring steel. Both interior surfaces of the magazine-well's mouth have a beveled contour to assist in the insertion of magazines.

Rectangular in shape, the slide is milled from bar stock using CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machinery. Three hardening processes are employed on both the slide and barrel. The final Tenifer finish, two hundredths of a millimeter in thickness,

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Milled into both the top and right side of the slide, the Glock's large ejection port enhances functional reliability. A large claw extractor, fitted to the slide at the rear of the ejection port on the right side, maintains its tension from a spring-loaded plunger, which, together with the firing pin assembly, are held in place by a polymer backing plate. Cocking serrations on the Model 19's slide have been cross-checked.

When shipped to the United States, all Glock pistols are equipped with polymer, white outline, adjustable rear sights to meet BATF import regulations. They are somewhat fragile and of little use on a defensive handgun. They can, and should be, substituted by the importer, Glock, Inc. (Dept. SOF, Suite 190, 5000 Highlands Parkway, Smyrna, GA 30080; phone: 404-432-1202) for fixed sights for a modest surcharge. Four heights are available: 6.1mm (lower impact), 6.5mm (standard issue), and the higher impact 6.9mm and 7.3mm. A rear sight mounting and adjustment device can be obtained by certified Glock armorers. The polymer front sight carries a white dot. Best of all, in my opinion, are the Armson Self Luminous Trijicon steel sights ("Armson's Bright Sights," SOF, March '87) with which the Models 17 or 19 can now be fitted directly from Glock, Inc. Sight radius of the Model 19 is 6 inches.

The hammer-forged rifling in Glock's barrels is equally innovative. Called "Hexagonal," this rifling lies somewhere between conventional land and groove and H&K's "Polygonal" bores. With a right-hand twist of one turn in 9.84 inches, this hexagonal profile (in cross-section a series of six small arcs connected by flat surfaces) provides a better gas seal, more consistent velocities, superior accuracy and ease of maintenance. A single-coil recoil spring under the barrel rides on a polymer guide rod which is hollow to serve as a cooling air pump.

There is an almost confusing array of magazines available for the Model 19. It comes equipped with two 15-round magazines whose floorplates are flush with the magazine-well. This yields a total of 16 rounds for those who will carry one round up the spout in disregard of Glock's admonition against this practice (for untrained personnel). A 17-round magazine with an extended floorplate is also available. Neither of these magazines can be used in the Model 17 series or Model 18 machine pistol. Model 17, 17-and-19-round magazines and Model 18 33-round maga-

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zines can be installed in the Model 19 although they will extend beyond the frame. All are of the single-position feed, staggered column type. Magazine bodies, followers and floorplates are fabricated from polymer. The magazine bodies have steel liners and indicator holes starting with round #4 up to the capacity of the magazine. When new, Glock magazines will drop freely from the magazine well. After use, however, the magazine walls will set with an outward bulge that requires their removal by hand. In my opinion, this is a matter of small consequence. If you haven't solved your problem with sixteen rounds, a pistol was an inappropriate choice for the scenario. Each Glock pistol is issued with a polymer magazine loader and cleaning rod and a nylon-bristle bore brush. The polymer storage box has been designed for armory stacking and retention with a steel rod or chain.

Other accessories include four different holsters and magazine pouches — all fabricated from polymer. Personally, I prefer Bruce Nelson's superb #1 Professional leather holster and single magazine pouch for the entire Glock series (Bruce Nelson Combat Leather, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 8691 CRB, Tucson, AZ 85738; catalog, \$3). This hand-fitted rig with its double belt-loop system pulls the grip area of the frame into the body, requires no straps for retention and can be worn either strong-side or cross-draw.

While somewhat different from the norm, there is nothing complex about the Glock's disassembly procedures. First, remove the magazine and remove any round in the chamber. Then, and only then, pull the trigger. Wrap the four fingers of the right hand over the slide from the right side with the thumb wrapped around the rear of the frame and retract the slide about an 1/8-inch (any more than that and the trigger will move forward to prevent separation of the slide and frame). Pull the slide lock downward with the thumb and index finger of the left hand. While the slide lock is down, push the slide forward and off the frame. Push the guide rod forward and remove the rod and recoil spring. Push the barrel forward, lift up and pull it back out of the slide. No further disassembly is recommended. Do not attempt to manipulate the trigger system after the slide has been removed or you may damage the inner trigger's spring. Reassemble in the reverse order. To disassemble the magazine, merely squeeze the side walls at the base and slide off the floorplate.

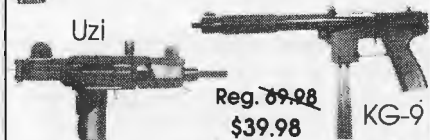
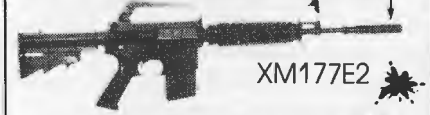
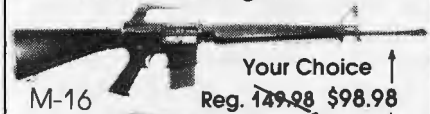
There can be no question about the Glock's levels of reliability or durability. It has successfully passed tests every bit as rigorous as the XM9 trials, involving hundreds of thousands of rounds. That it was excluded from the most recent XM9 trials is a commentary on the U.S. Army's conventional mind-set, not the Glock design.

SOF's test and evaluation of the Model 19 did no more than confirm impressions already built from thousands of rounds fired through our Glock 17, which looks and performs as well today as it did four years ago.

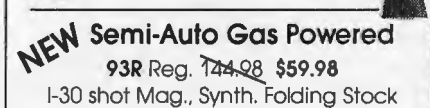
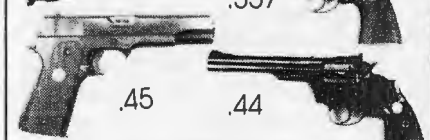
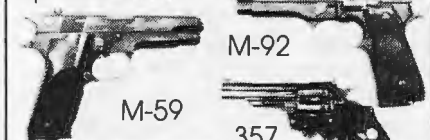
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There were no stoppages attributable to the pistol during the course of the more than 500 rounds fired to date through our test specimen. The frame's inherent elasticity dampens perceived recoil considerably. Target re-acquisition times from shot to shot are minimal. Quite muzzle heavy, the Model 19 points instinctively and comes on target with great speed. With its clean and constant trigger system, the hit probability is high. There is, of course, no hammer bite to distract the shooter. The frame's grip ergonomics are excellent.

What about the accuracy potential? Most engagements with a handgun will take place at 21 feet or less. Firing a pistol from 50 yards off a Ransom rest will provide information concerning its theoretical accuracy potential, but nothing about its practical accuracy in a stress scenario. We fired the Model 19 at ATS combat targets from 21 feet in the Weaver position. Our most accurate load, a 115-grain FMJ (Full Metal Jacket) cartridge manufactured by Black Hills Shooters Supply (Dept. SOF, 3401 South Highway 79, Rapid City, SD 57701; phone: 605-348-5150), will consistently dump five rounds into a ragged half-inch hole at this distance. That's outstanding.

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## U.S. IN HONDURAS

*Continued from page 51*

When the firing finally stopped there was no response from our calls to the two lieutenants who were in the vehicle. Everyone hesitated. In that instant we feared the worst and were terrified to go forward and view the results of our handiwork. The hesitation lasted for only a few seconds but those were probably the longest seconds of that platoon leader's life. When we did go forward we discovered two slightly dazed lieutenants trying to share the same small space under the steering wheel. The only damage to man or vehicle was a small cut on the head of one of the officers which was the result of the

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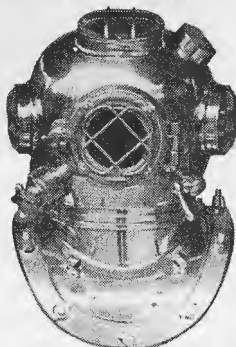
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mad scramble to avoid the rounds that that were impacting all around the HMMWV.

Luckily, all the rounds went high of their intended targets. I joked that they should get a "no go" for the ambush since the "enemy" had escaped unharmed, and they should run the HMMWV through the kill zone one more time to see if they could do better. Though obviously spoken in jest, the implicit criticism is valid. Soldiers, even well-trained soldiers like these, will naturally shoot high at night. If you are night firing at the perceived center of mass of your target, and you are in the prone position, the angle will have you firing high. You must aim at the perceived feet or base of your target, even if this means walking your rounds up from a point just a few feet to your front. This technique will allow you to hit at least something on your target. In this case it was fortunate that the proper technique wasn't used. The lives of two men were spared and the platoon was able to get a taste of the excitement they missed when the deployment failed to see combat.

Golden Pheasant was a disappointment to many of the men who participated in it because it was less than the shooting war they had expected, but it was a complete success for its intended political purpose. The United States helped Honduras defend itself against a Sandinista invasion of its borders, saved the contras from a possibly fatal defeat, and gave the world notice that it was not only willing but able to use its military force to protect the interests of its friends.

To the outstanding men who participated in the operation I can only say: Don't be too disappointed. You are the cutting edge of America's military might, and with the way the world situation is these days, you'll soon be used again. ✕

**FULL AUTO**

*Continued from page 13*

*changing to 7.92mm is more practical. In either instance you will need a barrel of the proper caliber, cloth BMG belts and the appropriate spacer clipped to the front of the feed tray. As the 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge's rim (.054") is slightly thicker than that of the .30-06 cartridge (.049"), more times than not it will bind on the Browning's T-slot. Use only 7.92mm ammunition of recent vintage, unless you want to watch the top cover sail down range. It never pays to be penny-wise and pound-foolish when it comes to machine gun fodder.*

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Is an AR-15 barrel manufactured any differently than an M16 barrel? Is it made of any different material?

Morris Edelstein  
New York, NY

*I do not know how this rumor started*

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or why it persists. All components in Colt-manufactured semiautomatic AR-15 rifles, including the barrel, are identical to the MilSpec parts used in the production of M16 series rifles, with the exception, of course, of those employed to manufacture the weapon in a semiautomatic-only format. It just wouldn't be cost-effective to fabricate and inventory two different sets of parts.

### COMBAT .22 RIMFIRES

Has anyone at SOF ever heard of the .22 rimfire cartridge being used in combat? If so, by whom and with what result?

R. Winston  
Boston, MA

There are no practical applications for the .22 LR rimfire cartridge on the battlefield. However, during World War II and thereafter, including the Vietnam War, special operations units of the U.S. Army employed sound-suppressed versions of such pistols as the High Standard HD or Colt Woodsman in that caliber for clandestine activities. They must be used at close range and head shots are usually required. Gary Powers was carrying a suppressed High Standard HD when his U-2 was shot down over the Soviet

Union. Weapons of this type and caliber are undoubtedly still in the inventory of special warfare units.

### NON-CORROSIVE 7.62x39mm AMMO

I have recently acquired a semiauto Kalashnikov. Does the People's Republic of China manufacture any non-corrosive 7.62x39mm ammunition? If I use corrosive ammunition how should I clean the weapon?

Michael Puckett  
Rocky Gap, VA

It has been reported that recent lots of 7.62x39mm ammunition imported by Norinco (China North Industries) with a dark brown, lacquered steel case (headstamped '71 87') and red primer annulus are non-corrosive. I have not personally confirmed this. However, I have fired tens of thousands of rounds of corrosive ammunition through a large number of weapons with no ill effects. Immediately after a shooting session with corrosive ammo, clean the bore, gas cylinder, piston and bolt carrier with Shooters Choice bore solvent. Leave a light coating of Shooters Choice on these components overnight. The next day repeat the process and lubricate everything with G96. ☒

## POISON IN PARADISE

Continued from page 65

Now the marina was aging poorly. The dock was falling apart. On the edge of the village, the once gaily-painted homes in island pastels were chipped, dirty, ragged looking and weather beaten. Native boats were in unseaworthy condition.

The customs officers now come aboard to clear us. Each is festooned with gold Rolexes — the kind with diamonds for numbers — hanging loosely from their wrists. They have two sausage-thick gold necklaces, . . . on the outside of their uniform shirts! They speak as if they don't see us. Their pupils are pinpoints. These customs officials are part of the chain of corruption which permeates Bahamian government from Prime Minister Lyndon O. Pindling on down. In the recent Lehder trial, a co-defendant testified under oath that he regularly paid the prime minister \$88,000 per month for protection.

After Customs leaves, the "Bikini Bunnies" are hit on by natives as they walk down the gangway. What I see in the marina is very impressive. It is not what I think of when I imagine a well-stocked marina, however. It resembles more a Colombian navy yard. Most of the slips are filled with 40-foot Cigarettes, Magnums and Scarabs.

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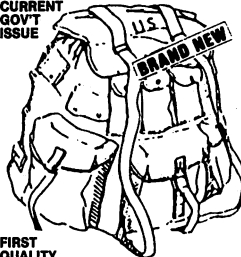
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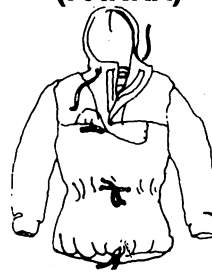
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The shop has row upon row of the latest high-tech Merc-cruiser engines and a full complement of the best tools and spares. The crews move freely about but seem to keep mostly to themselves. Later I would learn they stay away from drugs, preferring liquor instead. The Bahamians have the growing drug problem, not the smugglers. Bimini seems to have become a Colombian suburb.

The setting sun blazes streaks of red and gold across the shallow entrance of the harbor. Gone is the white glare of high noon that makes one squint. A mellow darkness would soon be settling over the islands. Five 40-foot Magnums hum out of the harbor — grey warships on a mission. My mind wanders back to the Plain of Reeds and a village named Moc Hoa, where the SEALs operated a RBR base under cover as "The Naval Advisory Riverine Force." The dope boats heading out could be mistaken for navy patrol vessels working their way to the China Sea for night patrol. They roar by in single file, across the reef, then move on line — five high-tech bullets aimed at the heart of America. Only one of the five is loaded with cocaine or pot. In about an hour, they will arrive off the Florida coast, anywhere between Key Largo and Palm Beach, presenting a nautical shell game for American interdiction personnel to unravel. Once they have pierced the veil, they will hand off to some accomplice on a fishing boat in Miami's Biscayne Bay, who will bring

in the poison and prepare it for market.

The Vice President's Task Force on drugs snares a hefty number of those who try to run the gauntlet either by sea or air. But they are overworked, understaffed, out-thought and out-financed by the cocaine cartels. For what they have to work with, however, their statistics are impressive. The captain, who is frequently asked by some of his native friends to carry contraband, tells me that in real-world figures, only a small percentage get caught.

"So why don't you?" I asked while he coiled lines on deck. "I'll take a few bucks from the sea" he said "and I'll do about anything else, but the shit they are running is poison. Not so much the pot, but that nose candy'll kill you."

"How much have you been offered?"  
 "Going rate from here to Miami is 25 percent of what you carry."

This captain had been very successful in other pursuits at sea. After the Bay of Pigs, where he had been mate on a trawler that inserted pre-invasion intelligence nets from Swan Island, many Cuban refugees needed a safe way to come to America. Thousands had come across the Florida straits on inner tubes and makeshift rafts. Thousands more hadn't made it. There was need for a safe, comfortable way to get refugee families to freedom's shores. He had been more than glad to supply it.

He made numerous clandestine pickups

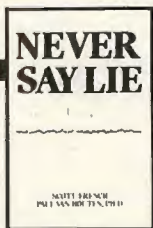
off any number of beaches between Puerto Padre and Banacoa on Cuba's north coast, for well-paying families. When Castro allowed boat lifts from Varadero Beach and Camarioca, he was there loading his vessel, having been paid substantial prices. During the Mariel boatlift in 1980, he was at sea with several wealthy Jamaican families along with their assets, sailing toward Miami. His fee was 10 percent of each family's assets. The captain had taken "his buck from the sea" also doing regular charters, sail-training groups, movies, documentaries. He is one of the few Sailors of Fortune I have known to actually make and enlarge a fortune.

We docked in Bimini for three days. In the mornings the schooner went for diving expeditions on the great Bahama bank, returning in the late afternoon so the guests could do the limbo at night at the Compleat Angler Bar and Lounge.

During that short period, I watched a multitude of dope deals go down. Aircraft dropped cocaine by pilot chute and kicked pot out their doors like old Air America hands did rice on the Lao border. A general free-enterprise dope market flourishes on this small island. Everywhere I went, dope smuggling, gold jewelry and cash were the only topics the Bahamians addressed.

Twice while we were anchored at some beach or reef, a lost smuggler mistook us for his mother ship. Both times the captain

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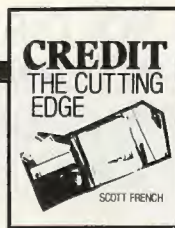
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spoke to them, his MAC 10 at the ready. The mate crouched in the companionway, covering him with a Browning Citori .410 scatter-gun. The sunburned guests loved it. To them it was great adventure — as if it were included in of the price of the trip.

One afternoon after we docked, a crowd gathered at the customs dock where the Bahamas defense boat *Great Inagua* had just pulled in. Two black prisoners whom the captain knew well were led down the gangway. They were trim, clear-eyed and bore the marks of a lifetime at sea — especially around their eyes.

I was told they were sportfishing boat captains who did not run drugs, were active in the anti-drug community, but were charged with picking up a bale of “square grouper” in the gulf stream, the product, I suspect, of some offload gone sour. It was possible. Natives tell stories of planes missing their assigned DZ and dropping bags of cocaine on their huts or gardens. They believe this is the way God provides for His flock. Didn't He send whiskey to be run across the gulf stream? Now He sends another gift. Maybe that is why they go to church three times a week. I met one black man, a Haitian, who was used by his boss as a human bird dog for pigeon hunting in Marsh Harbour northeast of Bimini. The boss would shoot the bird and send the Haitian into the mangroves to retrieve. On one such mission, the Haitian tripped over something. He marked the spot. When he went back alone, he saw that what he had

fallen over was a sack of 14 kilos of cocaine. A kilo sells in the Bahamas for \$10,000. He no longer is a bird dog. In Customs Square, the prisoners were brought before the commissioner, Bahamas defense force captain, two customs and immigration officers, a U.S. DEA agent and assorted policemen.

The authorities tried to humiliate the two men and were obviously playing to the gallery of gathering native onlookers. They tried verbally and physically to humiliate the men, who said they were innocent but took the abuse unflinchingly. Their pride and dignity in the face of this demeaning treatment impressed me. It apparently impressed the hundreds of islanders as well. As if weighing a silent, collective verdict, they looked at the captains — erect, defiant, proud, their faces a parchment saga of adventures at sea. The government and police representatives by comparison were overweight, paunchy, tinkling in gold, with manicured nails, reeking of pomade and aftershave, typifying a lifetime of gluttony and corruption.

Without a word, first one native, then another (all of whom had benefited in some way from that errant bale of “square grouper”) turned and walked away, leaving the authorities without an audience.

When the Customs Square emptied of natives, the first volley of rocks began. The prisoners walked calmly toward the area from where the stones were coming. The volleys came faster. The authorities ran for the *Great Inagua*, their faces betraying the

flash of panic which swept over them. A few stones found their mark. Large rocks fell on the wheel house and deck of the defense force boat as it hurriedly pulled away from Government Dock. At that moment I knew, really knew, for the first time and without doubt, that regardless of government announcements and graphs, the war on drugs on Bimini was in trouble. In the drug war, as in insurgencies, when the people must choose between corrupt officials or another wrong course of action, they will often decide against the corrupt officials, no matter how wrong the other.

Breakfast on board the schooner is zestfully and rapidly finished. While the cook cleans the galley, the captain, mate and guests prepare to cast off lines. Outside the harbour the breeze is freshening and dollops of salt spray can be seen on the swells.

Running into the gulf stream full sail, we meet the dope freighter coming from where she was anchored, in ballast, sitting high in the water. Her crew is smiling. They wave and cheer at us. ☘

---

## OPERATION OLIVERO

*Continued from page 43*

pound of rice and beans per person.” MICOIN is a state-controlled food dispensary. The Sandinistas have illegalized much free

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enterprise. "They sell sugar once a month when it's available. My God! Sugar cane grows like mad in this country and those fools somehow managed to cause a shortage of it. Somoza was a dictator, but under his government we had enough food. There were no lines and no scarcity, no rationing. All you had to do is pay your money and buy your things. Now you go to MICOIN every 8 or 15 days and you're lucky to get anything.

"What's worse, our money is worth nothing and the problem gets worse every day." I don't know if she knew the word inflation, but she had certainly felt its results, along with every other family in Nicaragua. It would be very conservative to say it was running at 100 percent. Ten years ago there were approximately eight cordova, (the Nicaraguan currency) to a dollar, now on the black market it ran more than 25,000 cords for a buck. Mine workers in town told me their weekly salary was between 40,000 and 60,000 cordovas. A small packet of two pieces of chewing gum cost 2,500 cordovas.

"And if you criticize them (the Sandinistas)," she continued, "no matter how small it might be, they'll call you a contra and arrest you on a whim. What can a woman like me with children do to survive?"

A dark, attractive woman standing nearby smiled, revealing a gold-framed upper front tooth. Her pointed breasts bulged in a tight black T-shirt with pink script in English stating: "This time for love, next time

for pay." Most of the troops couldn't read Spanish, let alone English, but their eyes scanned the script very thoroughly.

The rain stopped and almost everyone was back on the streets. The troops were leading the townspeople in cheers: "Viva, FDN (the Spanish acronym of the Resistance's northern front's old, better-known name Nicaraguan Democratic Force)! Long live the FDN!!" They threw their fists in the air with relish.

"We've taken the town! We've taken the town!" shouted Ranchero, a company commander of the *Nicarao*, throwing his arms in the air and jumping like a victorious World Series pitcher. It was true. With the exception of a few minor pockets of resistance, we had run the Sandinistas out of town.

Sandinista reinforcements were moving in, and around 1500 Snake rallied us for our withdrawal. Rigoberto's rear guard had been attacked, and he was already returning to Honduras. Mack also was calling his men in the *Nicarao* to rejoin him for the three-week march north. However, we were headed for our area of operations some 200 clicks south.

But the Sandinistas were waiting for us with a homicidal array of ambushes along our avenues of exit. We walked slowly, in deference to the wounded who were being carried in the middle of our disjointed Indian file. Up the labyrinth of cobblestone and dirt streets, between the faded pastel shacks, we proceeded to a wooden footbridge which crossed a ravine. My hands

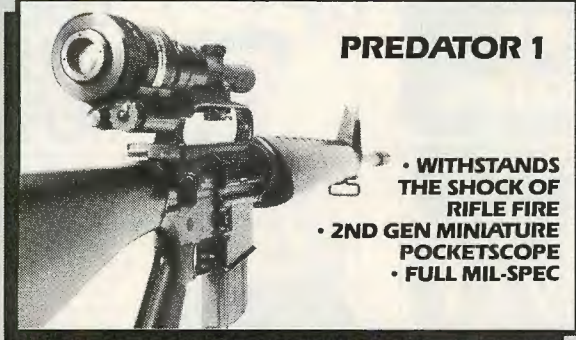
tingled, anticipating a bushwhack. Our lead man hesitantly tiptoed over the dilapidated slats of the bridge.

**BA-BA-BA-BA-BA!** Gunfire ripped from the bushes in the fold of a meadow on the other side of the bridge, 75 meters to our right. But it was directed at contras crossing another bridge. It was unclear if any were hit, but the commandos responded with grenades and full-auto bursts, and later claimed to have killed three pirs.

We crossed the bridge and found civilians carrying another wounded trooper to our caravan. It was little Cricket, a shy, cute 15-year-old with a winning smile, who was wounded in his knee when his squad was ambushed at point-blank range just as it left town. He was lucky compared to Chambilan, a skilled, easy-going five-year contra vet in his mid-twenties, who was so happy when I gave him an SOF camouflage patch a month earlier. Chambilan was killed just a couple of meters away. Thanks to the heroics of Danger, a 19-year-old former Sandinista platoon leader, none of the other squad members were hurt, little Cricket later said. Reflexively relying on the tactics he was taught by his CIA instructors at a military base in the United States, he cut down the two or three Sandinista attackers by slashing his AKM in crossing arcs, firing full automatic.

Big Cricket, who at 19 already had six years in the resistance, joined our exodus

*Continued on page 96*



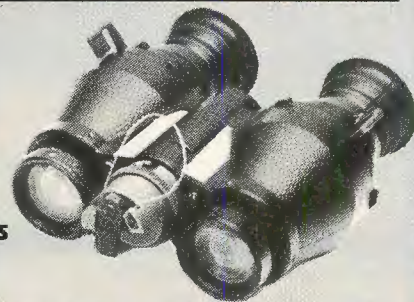
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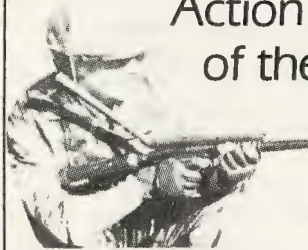
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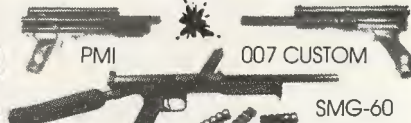
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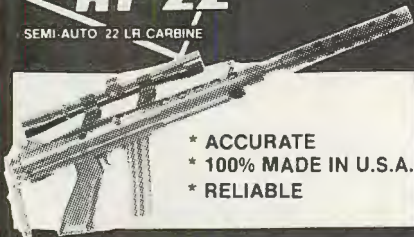
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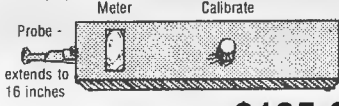
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*Continued from page 85*

with his six men. His girlfriend, Yarli, was at his side. The short, stocky lass with blazing eyes and no front teeth toted a CAR15, was the same age as her man and had just as many years with the contras.

Snake sent Big Cricket's squad up a hill which dominated the terrain, to provide security for the rest of us as we climbed a hill a hundred meters east.

Suspecting an ambush, Snake had the grizzled, middle-aged campesino who was carrying his knapsack and trooper Impan-tante accompany him up the hill before having the main body follow. True to my rule of "always follow the commander," I tagged behind Snake. He was limping badly, as he had been shot in the same knee before; I admired how he mastered his pain. Snake's years of battlefield experience paid off in correct anticipation. As soon as we reached the hillcrest, a blaze of AK fire beat down the high grass around us. We tumbled backward and hunkered down, holding on to tufts of grass.

Big Cricket's troops reacted immediately, lambasting the plateau from where the fire came with hot lead and shrapnel from their AKs, CAR15s, and M79s. It was almost like a primitive fire dance as Cricket and his men, spearheaded by the tough woman warrior Yorli, purposefully high-stepped across the hill, firing their weapons as they went. The piris must have been killed, wounded or so terrified by the unexpected volume of fire from a superior position that they fled. They weren't shooting anymore. Snake didn't want to waste time checking for kills. We reversed our field and walked along behind the military crest to another plateau, where we caught a brief breather and waited for the others to catch up. When they did, we scaled another slope, then climbed a dirt road, to a hilltop where other contras were pinned down by sniper fire.

"Get moving!" boomed Snake in his raspy voice. But they only stared at us, their normally dark-skinned faces blanched white with fear. It was obvious they wanted us to lead the way. They were more content

**Contra paramedic treats comrade who was shot in face at Siuna the day before. Contras wounded deep inside Nicaragua usually are left in the care of peasant collaborators until they recover enough to be evacuated by mule or on their own power to Honduras or Costa Rica. The contras have virtually no medicine inside Nicaragua and those seriously wounded would generally die from lack of medical attention.**

lying on Mother Earth, than exposing themselves to the possibility of being buried in her bosom.

We rested in the overgrowth a moment, and Snake radioed Alfa Lima to receive instructions how to hook up with him.

"Where's our friend Esteban?" Alfa inquired about me.

"He's here with me in the thick of this shit," Snake answered, chuckling.

"Look," Snake advised me, "keep low to the ground, and cut into the grass." He pointed to a swath of elephant grass some thirty meters from us. He didn't have to say another word. When he pushed my shoulder, I ran in a low crouch, the crack of rifle slugs snapping over my head. I found myself in the position of pointman, pushing a path through the tall grass. Its tough blades slashed my hands.

Popping in from the grassy clump, I was relieved to see Danger and his men. But I was disheartened when I looked up, realizing we had to climb a monstrous hill. Its steep slope was rocky and practically barren. Where we stood we could make out the dark specks of Sandinista troops in the distance, massing near the road bridge at La Luz-Siuna's outskirts. They were working on a contraption that looked like a fearsome Soviet BM-21 multiple rocket launcher. I hoped they didn't notice us in this sparse terrain. If fired accurately, a salvo of 40 122mm rockets could blast us into a wet spot on the side of this mountain.

There was no time to contemplate doom. I followed Danger's 16-year old girlfriend Maritsa as we started the climb. Her legs were short and she had difficulty stepping

over the tangles of treeless roots that littered the face of the slope, but she had a firm grip on her retractable stock H&K 40mm grenade launcher. The hot sun had reappeared and the white stones of the mountainside reflected the glare into our faces. I was sweating profusely. I had almost reached the summit when I heard a Canduche flying overhead. Oh, God, I thought, they spotted us. They're going to bomb us. My blood pressure soared, but settled when the bomber voided its bowels over the hills northwest of us.

That was my last scare for the day. We descended the other side of the hill and walked another hour over varying terrain of jungle and farmland, until we found Alfa Lima and his escort at a shack. We rested briefly, then walked until dark, stopping for the night at the thatched-roof home of a ten-member campesino family.

The troops had been so happy celebrating with the townspeople that they forgot to sack the Sandinista bank and gold reserves. After our retreat, a suspected Sandinista we took prisoner, who claimed to be a mine operator, said "Man, you blew it! There were 25-pound gold ingots not even a hundred meters from where you were in the chemical building, and no one was guarding it; the watchmen all ran away after one got shot in the ass."

"Aw, shit, how could it be?!" blurted out a commando in disgust, expressing what everyone felt. Another contra unit reportedly *did* break into the bank after we had left, and passed out the money to the townspeople, but that was small consolation for the troops, disappointed that they did not think to get the gold. Political prisoners in the Sandinista jails were also forgotten in the joyous confusion of victory, but later reports said they broke out on their own with other inmates, during the hysteria of the Sandinista withdrawal.

However, a half dozen contras led by 23-year old Napo, a long-ago Sandinista who had defected and become an illegal alien working at a Hollywood Boulevard hamburger stand in Los Angeles before returning to central America in 1983 to join the contras, managed to penetrate the mining facilities. But with no explosives, no thermite, and not knowing exactly what to do, their assault on the installation was limited to strafing the machinery with rifle fire, throwing grenades and shutting valves on pressure releases.

The last rebels to leave La Luz-Siuna departed no later than 1900, but before they left, they looted an arsenal of all they could carry — the prize being 22 SAM-7 missiles — and destroyed everything else (including six 14.5mm Soviet machine guns, hundreds of AKs and M16s, and dozens of RPGs), and blew up the ammo depot. A succession of explosions punctuated the evening quiet as we watched the tower of flames from the depot scrape the distant darkness, and we laughed at how the piris blindly fired their BM-21 rocket salvos, lashing out at ghosts in the night. ☘

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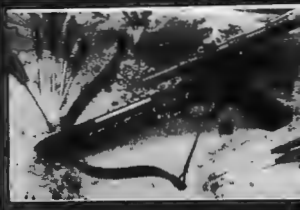
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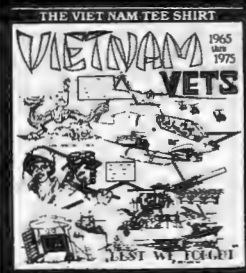
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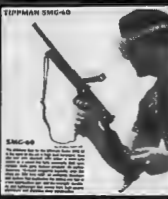


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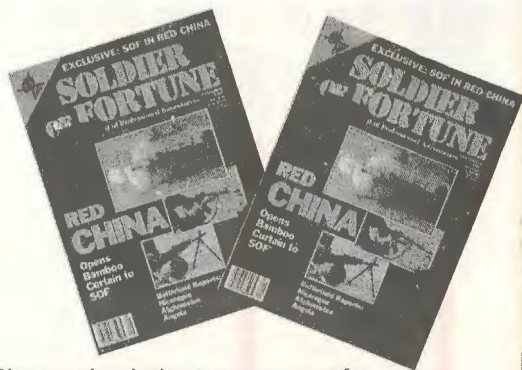
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